# MAMMONART

By UPTON SINCLAIR

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# MAMMONART

*An Essay in Economic Interpretation*

BY
UPTON SINCLAIR

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UPTON SINCLAIR

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# CONTENTS


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| I. | Ogi, the Son of Og | 1 |
| II. | Who Owns the Artists? | 7 |
| III. | Art and Personality | 11 |
| IV. | The Laborer and His Hire | 14 |
| V. | The Lord's Anointed | 16 |
| VI. | Artificial Childhood | 19 |
| VII. | Mrs. Ogi Emerges | 21 |
| VIII. | The Horse-Trade | 23 |
| IX. | The Class Lie | 25 |
| X. | Mrs. Ogi Orders Jazz | 27 |
| XI. | The Populist Convention | 29 |
| XII. | Kansas and Judea | 32 |
| XIII. | The Communist Almanac | 35 |
| XIV. | God's Propaganda | 38 |
| XV. | Mrs. Prestonia Orders Plumbing | 40 |
| XVI. | Mrs. Ogi Orders Etiquette | 42 |
| XVII. | William Randolph Alcibiades | 45 |
| XVIII. | The Age of Hero-Worship | 46 |
| XIX. | Hundred Per Cent Athenian | 49 |
| XX. | The Funny Man of Reaction | 52 |
| XXI. | Athens and Los Angeles | 56 |
| XXII. | The Slave Empire | 58 |
| XXIII. | Dumb Pious Æneas | 60 |
| XXIV. | The Roman Four Hundred | 63 |
| XXV. | The American Empire | 68 |
| XXVI. | The Christian Revolution | 70 |
| XXVII. | The Ins and the Outs | 71 |
| XXVIII. | The Heaven of Elegance | 74 |
| XXIX. | The Muckraker's Hell | 77 |
| XXX. | The Pious Poisoners | 80 |
| XXXI. | The Papal Paymasters | 84 |
| XXXII. | Who Is Crazy? | 88 |

| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| XXXIII. | Ogi, Anglomaniac | 92 |
| XXXIV. | Phosphorescence and Decay | 95 |
| XXXV. | The Good Man Theory | 98 |
| XXXVI. | Comic Relief | 101 |
| XXXVII. | Praise for Puritans | 105 |
| XXXVIII. | Comrade's Progress | 110 |
| XXXIX. | Vanity Fair | 113 |
| XL. | Glory Propaganda | 116 |
| XLI. | Unbridled Desires | 120 |
| XLII. | The Harpooner of Hypocrisy | 124 |
| XLIII. | Écrasez l'Infame | 130 |
| XLIV. | The Trumpeter of Revolution | 135 |
| XLV. | The Harvard Manner | 139 |
| XLVI. | The Poisoned Rat | 142 |
| XLVII. | Virtue Rewarded | 144 |
| XLVIII. | The Good Fellow's Code | 146 |
| XLIX. | The Gauger of Genius | 148 |
| L. | The Brain Proprietor | 150 |
| LI. | Politics Is Fate | 154 |
| LII. | Behind the Hedge-Rows | 159 |
| LIII. | Tory Romance | 163 |
| LIV. | The Meaning of Magic | 167 |
| LV. | The Tory Whip | 171 |
| LVI. | The Fear That Kills | 173 |
| LVII. | The First Lord of Letters | 175 |
| LVIII. | The Angel of Revolt | 178 |
| LIX. | The Stable-Keeper's Son | 183 |
| LX. | The Predatory Artist | 190 |
| LXI. | The Old Communard | 194 |
| LXII. | Tyger, Tyger! | 199 |
| LXIII. | The Child of His Age | 202 |
| LXIV. | Prayer in Adultery | 204 |
| LXV. | Main Street in France | 206 |
| LXVI. | The Mattress Grave | 209 |
| LXVII. | Siegfried-Bakunin | 211 |

| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| LXVIII. | The Gospel of Silence | 216 |
| LXIX. | The Lullaby Laureate | 220 |
| LXX. | High-Brow Society | 225 |
| LXXI. | Official Pessimism | 228 |
| LXXII. | God Save the People | 231 |
| LXXIII. | The Collector of Snobs | 233 |
| LXXIV. | Arts and Crafts | 236 |
| LXXV. | Seeing America First | 239 |
| LXXVI. | The Age of Innocence | 242 |
| LXXVII. | A Snow-Bound Saint | 244 |
| LXXVIII. | Puritanism in Decay | 246 |
| LXXIX. | The Angel Israfel | 249 |
| LXXX. | The Good Grey Poet | 253 |
| LXXXI. | Cabbage Soup | 258 |
| LXXXII. | Dead Souls | 260 |
| LXXXIII. | The Russian Hamlet | 263 |
| LXXXIV. | The Dead-House | 265 |
| LXXXV. | The Christian Bull-Dog | 268 |
| LXXXVI. | The Peasant Count | 271 |
| LXXXVII. | Headaches and Dyspepsia | 276 |
| LXXXVIII. | The Troughs of Zolaism | 279 |
| LXXXIX. | The Sportive Demon | 283 |
| XC. | The Foe of Formulas | 285 |
| XCI. | The Biological Superior | 289 |
| XCII. | The Overman | 291 |
| XCIII. | The Octopus Cities | 295 |
| XCIV. | The Inspired Parrakeet | 298 |
| XCV. | The Green Carnation | 302 |
| XCVI. | The White Chrysanthemum | 307 |
| XCVII. | The Duel of Wit | 312 |
| XCVIII. | The Cultured-Class Historian | 316 |
| XCIX. | The Premier Novelist | 322 |
| C. | The Uncrowned King | 326 |
| CI. | Smiling America | 333 |
| CII. | The Eminent Tankard-Man | 337 |

| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| CIII. | The Soldier of Fortune | 341 |
| CIV. | The Bowery Boy | 345 |
| CV. | The California Octopus | 349 |
| CVI. | The Old-Fashioned American | 353 |
| CVII. | Badgad-on-the-Subway | 357 |
| CVIII. | Supermanhood | 363 |
| CIX. | The Stealthy Nemesis | 372 |
| CX. | The Rebel Immortal | 379 |
| CXI. | A Text-Book for Russia | 383 |

# MAMMONART

## CHAPTER I

### OGI, THE SON OF OG

One evening in the year minus ninety-eight thousand and seventy-six—that is, one hundred thousand years ago—Ogi, the son of Og, sat in front of a blazing fire in the cave, licking his greasy lips and wiping his greasy fingers upon the thick brown hair of his chest. The grease on Ogi's lips and fingers had come from a chunk out of an aurochs, which Ogi had roasted on a sharpened stick before the fire. The tribe had been hunting that day, and Ogi himself had driven the spear through the eye of the great creature. Being young, he was a hero; and now he had a hero's share of meat in him, and sat before the fire, sleepy-eyed, retracing in dull, slow revery the incidents of the hunt.

In his hand was the toasting-stick, and he toyed with it, making marks upon the ground. Presently, half involuntarily, there came a pattern into these marks: a long mark—that was how the body of the aurochs went; two marks in front, the forelegs of the aurochs; two marks in back, the hind legs; a big scratch in front, the head. And suddenly Ogi found a thrill running over him. There was the great beast before him, brought magically back to life by markings in the dirt. Ogi had made the first picture!

But then terror seized him. He lived in a world of terror, and always had to act before he dared to think. Hastily he scratched over the dirt, until every trace of the magic beast was gone. He gazed behind him, expecting to see the spirit of the aurochs, summoned into the cave by this fearful new magic. He glanced at the other members of his tribe, crouching sleepily about the fire, to see if they had noticed his daring venture.

But nothing evil happened; the meat in Ogi's stomach did not develop bad spirits that summer night, neither did the lightning poke him with its dagger, nor a tree-limb crash upon his head. Therefore, next evening a temptation came upon him; he remembered his marks, and ventured to bring back his magic aurochs, and sit before the fire and watch him toss his head and snort at his enemies. As time passed Ogi did a thing yet bolder; he made a straight up-and-down mark, with two prongs underneath, and a round circle on top; Ogi himself, a double Ogi, with his long spear stopping the monster's charge!

Even that did not prove bad magic; Ogi did not sicken, no lightning-daggers or tree-branches struck him. With practice, another idea came; he indicated the body of the aurochs by two marks, one above and one below, where the creature vanished into space. Between these were other scratches indicating a shaggy coat; and in the head a round spot, with a black hole punched deep by the toasting-stick—the eye of the monster, glaring balefully at Ogi, and filling him with such thrills as had never before passed along the nerves of a living organism.

Of course such big magic could not long remain a secret. Ogi was irresistibly driven to show his home-made aurochs to the tribe, and there was a tremendous commotion. It was a miracle, all made clear by their gruntings; they knew the monster instantly—an aurochs, and nothing else! They cried out with delight at the cleverness of the representation.

(And ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and sixty-six years later, when the writer was a little boy, he used to see in a certain home of wealth which he visited, three pictures hanging in the dining-room, and appealing to gastronomic emotions. One picture represented several peaches on a platter, another represented half a dozen fish on a string, the third showed two partridges hanging by their necks. The members of the tribe of Ogi, now called the Merchants and Manufacturers Association of Baltimore, would gather at supper parties and marvel at this big magic. Here were works of art, and all knew they were works of art, and knew exactly why; they would say of the fish: "You can see the very shine of the scales!" Of the peaches: "You can rub the fuzz off them!" Of the birds: "You can bury your hands in the feathers!")

But when the first thrills had passed, the dwellers in the cave with Ogi fell victims to panic. An aurochs was a fearful and destructive beast; it was hard enough to have to kill him for food—but now to bring back his angry spirit was tempting fate. In the Holy Mountain fronting the cave dwelt the Great Hunter, who made all aurochs, and would be jealous of usurpers. The Witch Doctor of the tribe, who visited the Great Hunter and made spells for good luck—he was the proper person to make magic, and not an up-start boy. So the Witch Doctor trampled out the drawing of Ogi, and the Old Man of the tribe, who made the laws, drove him out from the cave, and into the night where the sabre-toothed tiger roamed.

(And last winter the writer stood one night at 43rd Street and Broadway, a busy corner of New York, and across the front of a building a whole block long he beheld great letters of violet fire, spelling three words: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. He entered the building, and there upon a silver screen he saw a flash of lightning, followed by a burst of clouds and a terrifying clatter of stage thunder, and out of the lightning and clouds and thunder was unrolled before his eyes the Second Commandment: *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.)*

Ogi found a cave of his own, and escaped the sabre-tooth tiger. And not all the furies of the Witch Doctor, nor even the Ten Commandments of the Great Hunter, could take from his mind the memory of those delicious thrills which had stolen over him when he made the magic aurochs in the dirt. Being now alone, he had time for magic, and he got red stones and covered the walls of his cave with pictured beasts of many sorts. And presently came young men from the tribe, and beholding what he had done, they took to visiting him in secret to share the forbidden thrills.

(And on Main Street in our Great City, I can take you to a cave with letters of fire over the top, called an "arcade," and you may go in, and find the magic of Ogi hidden in little boxes, into which you drop a token made of copper, and see what is to be seen. One part of this cave is labeled, *For Men Only*. I have never been into

this part, and therefore do not know what magic the descendants of Ogi have there hidden; but it is interesting to know that a nerve channel, once established in a living organism, can be handed down through generations to the number of three thousand, three hundred and thirty-three.)

Now in the course of time it happened that there was war in the tribe between the Old Man and the Next Oldest Man; and also between the Old Witch Doctor and the Next Doctor. The rebels, having learned about the magic of Ogi, desired to make use of it. There was a secret meeting, at which the rebel Witch Doctor declared that he had had an interview with the Great Hunter on the Holy Mountain, and the Great Hunter Himself had given Ogi power to make the magic aurochs, and to kill them in magic hunts. In other words, said the Witch Doctor, Ogi was an Inspired Artist; and if he and his friends would help the new party into power, Ogi would become Court Painter, and his scratches would be raised to the status of Ritual. Needless to say, Ogi was delighted at that, and likewise his friends, some of whom had learned to make scratches almost as good as Ogi's, and who desired now to become Inspired Artists, and to decorate the cave walls and weapons of the tribe.

But one provision must be made clear, said the rebel Witch Doctor; Ogi and his friends must understand that they were to glorify the magic of this particular Witch Doctor. When they portrayed hunting, they must make it plain that it was the new Old Man who was head of the hunt; they must make him wonderful and fearful to the tribe. Ogi and his pupils answered that so long as they were permitted to make drawings of aurochs and of hunters, it made not the slightest difference what aurochs and what hunters they portrayed. Art was a thing entirely aloof from politics and propaganda. And so the bargain was settled; the banner of insurrection was raised, and the new Old Man became head of the tribe, and the new Witch Doctor set up his magic behind the aurochs-skin curtains in the far end of the cave; and Ogi made many pictures of both of them.

(And I have walked through the palaces of kings, and through temples and cathedrals in many lands, and have seen long rows of portraits of the Old Men of many

tribes, clad in robes of gorgeous colors, and wearing upon their heads crowns of gold and flashing jewels; they were called kings and emperors and dukes and earls and princes and captains of industry and presidents of chambers of commerce. I have seen also the portraits and statues of Witch Doctors of many varieties of magic; they were called popes and priests and cardinals and abbots and college presidents and doctors of divinity. And always the paintings were called Old Masters.)

So Ogi became Court Painter and painted the exploits of his tribe. And when the tribe went out to battle with other tribes, Ogi made pictures to show the transcendent beauty of his tribe, and the unloveliness of the tribe they were to destroy.

(And when my tribe went out to battle, its highly paid magazine illustrators made pictures of noble-faced maidens shouting war-cries, and it was called a Liberty Bond Campaign. And the story-tellers of my tribe became martial, and called themselves Vigilantes.)

Now Ogi throve greatly, developing his technique, so that he could show all kinds of beasts and men. The fame of his magic spread, and other tribes came to visit the caves and to marvel at his skill, and to gaze reverently upon the Inspired Artist.

(And in a certain hotel restaurant in New York I was admitted behind the magic red cord which separates the great from the unheard of, and sitting at a table my companion enlightened me with discreet nods and whispers, saying: "That is Heywood Broun; and next to him is Rita Weiman; and that's Mencken just coming in; and that round little man in the brown suit and the big spectacles is Hergesheimer.")

The fame of Ogi, and the magic of which he was master, brought thrills to the young women of the tribe, and they cast themselves at his feet, and so his talent was not lost to future generations.

(And in the galleries of Europe I gazed upon miles of madonnas—madonnas mournful and madonnas smiling, madonnas with wavy golden hair and madonnas with straight black hair—but never a madonna that was not plump, manicured and polished and robed in silks and satins, as became the mistresses of court painters, and of popes and cardinals and abbots able to pay for publicity.)

The sons and grandsons of Ogi cultivated his magic, and found new ways to intensify the thrills of art. They learned to make clay figures, and to carve the Old Men of the tribe and the Witch Doctors out of wood and stone.

(And just before the war, being in Berlin, I was taken by a friend for a drive down the Sieges Allée, between rows of white marble monsters in halberd and helm and cowl and royal robes, brandishing sceptres and mitres, battle-axes and two-bladed swords. Being myself a barbarian, I ventured to titter at this spectacle; whereupon my friend turned pale, and put his fingers upon my lips, indicating the driver of the hack, and whispering how more than once it had happened that presumptuous barbarians who tittered at the Old Men of the Hohenzollern tribe had been driven by a loyal hackman straight to the police station and to jail.)

Likewise the sons of Ogi learned to make noises in imitation of the songs of birds, and so they were able to bring back the thrills of first love. They learned to imitate the rolling of thunder, and the clash of clubs and spears in battle fury, and so they were able to renew the glory of the hunt and the slaughter.

(And in the year 1870 the Khedive of Egypt offered a prize of ten thousand pounds to that descendant of Ogi who should make the most powerful magic out of his ancestral slaughterings; and now, throughout all civilization, the masters of the machines of slaughter put on their honorific raiment, and escort their pudgy wives, bedecked with jewels, to performances of their favorite grand opera, "Aida.")

Likewise the descendants of Ogi learned to enact their adventures in imitation hunts. Inspired by music, they would dance about the camp-fire, thrusting their weapons into a magic aurochs, shouting when they saw him fall, and licking their chops at the taste of imaginary flesh.

(And in thirty thousand "movie" houses throughout the United States the tribes now gather to woo and win magic darlings of luxury, and lick their chops over the acquirement of imaginary millions; also to shudder at wicked Russian Bolsheviks with bristling beards, at villainous "Red" agitators with twisted faces, and at such other spectacles as the Old Men and the Witch Doctors

prepare for them, according to instructions from the Great Hunter on the Holy Mountain.)

Three thousand, three hundred and thirty-three generations have passed, and in every generation the descendants of Ogi have had to face the problem of their relationship to the Old Men and the Witch Doctors. Ogi himself was a hunter, who slew his aurochs with his own hand, and butchered and cooked his meat before he ate it. But now it has been long since any descendant of Ogi has driven a spear through the eye of a charging aurochs. They have become specialists in the imaginary; their hands adjusted, not to spears and stone hatchets, but to brushes and pencils, fountain-pens and typewriter keys. So, when they are cast out from the tribe they can no longer face the sabre-toothed tiger and find meat for themselves and their beautiful women; so, more than ever, the grip of the Old Men and the Witch Doctors grows tight upon them. More than ever it is required that their pictures and stories shall deal with things of which the Old Men and the Witch Doctors approve; more than ever they are called upon to honor and praise the customs of their tribe, as against the customs of all other tribes of men or angels.

## CHAPTER II

### WHO OWNS THE ARTISTS?

Many and various are the art-forms which the sons and grandsons of Ogi have invented; but of all these forms, the one which bores us most quickly is the parable —a little story made up for the purpose of illustrating a special lesson. Therefore, I hasten to drop Ogi and his sons and grandsons, and to say in plain English that this book is a study of the artist in his relation to the propertied classes. Its thesis is that from the dawn of human history, the path to honor and success in the arts has been through the service and glorification of the ruling classes; entertaining them, making them pleasant to themselves, and teaching their subjects and slaves to stand in awe of them.

Throughout this book the word artist is used, not in the narrow sense popular in America, as a man who paints pictures and illustrates magazines; but in its broad

sense, as one who represents life imaginatively by any device, whether picture or statue or poem or song or symphony or opera or drama or novel. It is my intention to study these artists from a point of view so far as I know entirely new; to ask how they get their living, and what they do for it; to turn their pockets inside out, and see what is in them and where it came from; to put to them the question already put to priests and preachers, editors and journalists, college presidents and professors, school superintendents and teachers: WHO OWNS YOU, AND WHY?

The book will present an interpretation of the arts from the point of view of the class struggle. It will study art works as instruments of propaganda and repression, employed by the ruling classes of the community; or as weapons of attack, employed by new classes rising into power. It will study the artists who are recognized and honored by critical authority, and ask to what extent they have been servants of ruling class prestige and instruments of ruling class safety. It will consider also the rebel artists, who have failed to serve their masters, and ask what penalties they have paid for their rebellion.

The book purposes to investigate the whole process of art creation, and to place the art function in relation to the sanity, health and progress of mankind. It will attempt to set up new canons in the arts, overturning many of the standards now accepted. A large part of the world's art treasures will be taken out to the scrap-heap, and a still larger part transferred from the literature shelves to the history shelves of the world's library.

Since childhood the writer has lived most of his life in the world's art. For thirty years he has been studying it consciously, and for twenty-five years he has been shaping in his mind the opinions here recorded; testing and revising them by the art-works which he has produced, and by the stream of other men's work which has flowed through his mind. His decisions are those of a working artist, one who has been willing to experiment and blunder for himself, but who has also made it his business to know and judge the world's best achievements.

The conclusion to which he has come is that mankind is today under the spell of utterly false conceptions of what art is and should be; of utterly vicious and per-

verted standards of beauty and dignity. We list six great art lies now prevailing in the world, which this book will discuss:

Lie Number One: the Art for Art's Sake lie; the notion that the end of art is in the art work, and that the artist's sole task is perfection of form. It will be demonstrated that this lie is a defensive mechanism of artists run to seed, and that its prevalence means degeneracy, not merely in art, but in the society where such art appears.

Lie Number Two: the lie of Art Snobbery; the notion that art is something esoteric, for the few, outside the grasp of the masses. It will be demonstrated that with few exceptions of a special nature, great art has always been popular art, and great artists have swayed the people.

Lie Number Three: the lie of Art Tradition; the notion that new artists must follow old models, and learn from the classics how to work. It will be demonstrated that vital artists make their own technique; and that present-day technique is far and away superior to the technique of any art period preceding.

Lie Number Four: the lie of Art Dilettantism; the notion that the purpose of art is entertainment and diversion, an escape from reality. It will be demonstrated that this lie is a product of mental inferiority, and that the true purpose of art is to alter reality.

Lie Number Five: the lie of the Art Pervert; the notion that art has nothing to do with moral questions. It will be demonstrated that all art deals with moral questions; since there are no other questions.

Lie Number Six: the lie of Vested Interest; the notion that art excludes propaganda and has nothing to do with freedom and justice. Meeting that issue without equivocation, we assert:

*All art is propaganda. It is universally and inescapably propaganda; sometimes unconsciously, but often deliberately, propaganda.*

As commentary on the above, we add, that when artists or art critics make the assertion that art excludes propaganda, what they are saying is that their kind of propaganda is art, and other kinds of propaganda are not art. Orthodoxy is my doxy, and heterodoxy is the other fellow's doxy.

As further commentary we explain that the word morality is not used in its popular sense, as a set of rules forbidding you to steal your neighbor's purse or his wife. Morality is the science of conduct; and since all life is conduct, it follows that all art—whether it knows it or not—deals with the question of how to be happy, and how to unfold the possibilities of the human spirit. Some artists preach self-restraint, and some preach self-indulgence; and both are preachers. Some artists says that the purpose of art is beauty, and they produce beautiful art works to demonstrate the truth of this doctrine; when such art works are completed, they are beautiful demonstrations of the fact that the purpose of art is to embody the artist's ideas of truth and desirable behavior.

What is art? We shall give a definition, and take the rest of the book to prove it. We hope to prove it both psychologically, by watching the art process at work, and historically, by analyzing the art works of the ages. We assert:

*Art is a representation of life, modified by the personality of the artist, for the purpose of modifying other personalities, inciting them to changes of feeling, belief and action.*

We put the further question: What is great art? We answer:

*Great art is produced when propaganda of vitality and importance is put across with technical competence in terms of the art selected.*

As commentary we add that whether a certain propaganda is really vital and important is a question to be decided by the practical experience of mankind. The artist may be overwhelmingly convinced that his particular propaganda is of supreme importance, whereas the experience of the race may prove that it is of slight importance; therefore, what was supposed to be, and was for centuries taken to be a sublime work of art, turns out to be a piece of trumpery and rubbish. But let the artist in the labor of his spirit and by the stern discipline of hard thinking, find a real path of progress for the race; let him reveal new impulses for men to thrill to, new perils for them to overcome, new sacrifices for them to make, new joys for them to experience; let him make himself master of the technique of any one of the arts, and put that propaganda

adequately and vitally before his fellows—and so, and so alone, he may produce real and enduring works of art.

## POSTSCRIPT

Manifestly, all this depends upon the meaning given to the term propaganda. The writer thought that he could trust his critics to look it up in the dictionary; but during the serial publication of the book he discovered that the critics share that false idea of the word which was brought into fashion during the World War—this idea being itself a piece of propaganda. Our own martial fervor was of course not propaganda, it was truth and justice; but there crept in an evil enemy thing, known as "German propaganda"; and so the word bears a stigma, and when this book applies it to some honorable variety of teaching, the critics say that we are "stretching its meaning," and being absurd.

But all we are doing is to use the word correctly. The Standard Dictionary defines propaganda as: "Effort directed systematically toward the gaining of support for an opinion or course of action." This, you note, contains no suggestion of reprobation. Propaganda may be either good or bad, according to the nature of the teaching and the motives of the teacher. The Jesuits have been carrying on a propaganda of their faith for three hundred years, and one does not have to share this faith in order to admit their right to advocate it. The present writer has for twenty-one years been carrying on a propaganda for Socialism, and has a sturdy conviction that his time has not been wasted.

We take certain opinions and courses of action for granted; they come to us easily, and when in a poem or other work of art we encounter the advocacy of such things, it does not seem to us propaganda. Take, for example, that favorite theme of poets, the following of our natural impulses; it is pleasant to do this, and the poet who gives such advice awakens no opposition. But it is different in the case of ideas which require concentration of the attention and effort of will; such ideas trouble and repel us, we resent them, and the term "propaganda" is

our expression of resentment. For example, the old poet Herrick advises:

> Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
> Old time is still a-flying,
> And this same flower that smiles today,
> Tomorrow will be dying.

Here is an attitude of relaxation toward life; the poet gives his advice under a beautiful simile and with alluring melody, and therefore it is poetry. If we should call it propaganda, all critics would agree that we were "stretching the word," and being absurd. But now, take four lines by Matthew Arnold:

> Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
> Let the victors, when they come,
> When the forts of folly fall,
> Find your body by the wall.

Here is an utterance of exactly the opposite kind, an utterance of moral conviction and resolution; the poet is bidding us fight for truth and justice. Like Herrick, he has chosen an effective simile, and has put music and fervor into his message; as poetry his lines are exactly as good as Herrick's; and yet, if we called them propaganda, how many critics would object?

This book will endeavor to demonstrate that exactly the same thing applies to the phenomena of the class struggle, as they appear either in real life or in works of art. It comes easy to human beings to accept society as it is, and to admire the great and strong and wealthy. On the other hand, it gives us a painful wrench to be told that there are moral excellences and heroic splendors in the souls of unwashed and unbeautiful workingmen. We resent such ideas, and likewise the persons who persist in forcing them into our minds; which explains why all orthodox critics agree that Jesus and Tolstoi are propagandists, while Shakespeare and Goethe are pure and unsullied creative artists. Such distinction between "art" and "propaganda" is purely a class distinction and a class weapon; itself a piece of ruling-class propaganda, a means of duping the minds of men, and keeping them enslaved to false standards both of art and of life.

## CHAPTER III

### ART AND PERSONALITY

We have promised to prove our thesis psychologically, by watching the art process at work, and historically, by studying the art works of the ages. We begin with the former task.

Let us investigate the art process in its elemental forms, as we have seen them in the story of Ogi. Art begins as the effort of man to represent reality; first, for the purpose of bringing it back to his own mind, and second, for the purpose of making it apprehensible to others. Just as Ogi would seek for ways to keep the meat of the aurochs for as long as possible so that he might eat it, so he would keep the memory of the aurochs so that he might contemplate it. And just as he would share the meat of the aurochs in a feast with his fellows, and derive honor and advantage therefrom, so he would use a picture of the aurochs, or a story of the hunt, or a song about it, or a dance reproducing it.

Thus we note two motives, the second of them predominantly social. It is this impulse to communicate ideas and emotions to others, that becomes the dominant motive in art, and is the determining factor in the greatness of art. We share Ogi's memory of the hunt, his thrills of fear, his furious struggle, his triumph over a chunk of brutal and non-rational force. Try it on your own little Ogis, and you will find they never tire of hearing about the aurochs hunt; and—here is the essential point—while hearing, they are living in the minds of others, they are becoming social beings. So through the ages the race has developed its great civilizing force, the sympathetic imagination, which has brought the tribes together into nations, and ultimately may bring the nations into the human race.

The pleasures which we derive from a picture or representation of reality are many and complicated. There is, first of all, the pleasure of recognition. In its cruder form it is like guessing a puzzle; in more mature reproductions we have the pleasure of following the details. "That is old Smith," we say—"even to the wart on his nose!" We say: "You can see the shine of the fish's scales, you can wipe the fuzz off the peach, you can bury

your hands in the birds' feathers!" But is that all there is to art? Manifestly not, for if it were, the sons and grandsons of Ogi would have been put out of business by the photographic camera. You can take a microscope to the product of a camera, and discover endless more details —a bigger magic than any son or grandson of Ogi has achieved.

But even supposing that a micro-photograph were the highest art, still you could not get away from the influence of personality. There would always remain the problem: Upon what shall the camera-lens be focussed?

The first artist I met in my life was a painter, the late J. G. Brown. He used to paint pictures of newsboys and country urchins, and the quaint-looking old fellows who loaf in cross-roads stores. As a boy I watched him at work, and roamed about the country with him when he selected his subjects. At this distance I remember only two things about him, his benevolent gray beard, and the intense repugnance he expressed when I pointed out an old war veteran who had lost an arm. Deformity and mutilation—oh, horrible! Never could an artist tolerate such a subject as that!

But growing older, I observed that some of the world's greatest artists had made a habit of painting mutilations and deformities. I saw "Old Masters" portraying crucifixions and martyrdoms; I saw the nightmares of Doré, and the war paintings of Verestchagin. So I understand the difference between a man who wishes to probe the deeps of the human spirit, and one who wishes merely to be popular with children and childish-minded adults. The late J. G. Brown was a "realist," according to the popular use of the term; that is, having selected a subject, he painted him exactly as he was; but by deliberately excluding from his artistic vision everything suggesting pain and failure, he left you as the sum total of his work an utterly false and sentimental view of life.

Most artists go even further in imposing their personality upon their work. Having selected a subject, they do not reproduce it exactly, but modify it, emphasizing this trait or that. This process is known as "idealizing." The word is generally understood to mean making the thing more pretty, more to the beholder's taste; but this is a misuse of the word. To idealize a subject means to

modify it according to an idea, to make it expressive of that idea, whether pleasing or otherwise. Henry James tells a story about a portrait painter, who takes as his subject a prominent man; divining the fundamental cheapness and falsity of the man's character, he paints a portrait which brings out these qualities, and so for the first time reveals the man to the world, and causes the man's wife to leave him. That is one kind of "idealizing"; but manifestly the portrait painter who practiced that method would have a hard time to find sitters.

What generally happens in such cases we saw when Ogi was invited to portray the Witch Doctor and the Old Man of his tribe. The last great hero of the Hohenzollerns, who paid for those white marble monsters at which I tittered in the Sieges Allée, is cursed with a withered left arm, a cause of agonies of humiliation to his strutting soul. In his photographs you will see him carefully posed, so that his left arm is partly turned away. But how about the countless paintings he had made of himself? Do you imagine that the painter ever failed to supply a sound and sturdy left arm? In the same way, in the pictorial labors of all the Ogis of Egypt, you will find the ruler always represented as of abnormal stature. Manifestly, in a settled empire the ruler will be of smaller stature than his fighting men, because he will be coddled in childhood; but the smaller he becomes in reality, the more rigid the art convention that he is big.

It was for offenses such as this that Plato drove the artists out of his Republic. They were liars and pretenders, the whole tribe, and destroyed men's respect for truth. But as a matter of fact, this kind of idealizing of rulers and fighting men may be entirely sincere. The artist is more sensitive than his fellowmen—that is what makes him an artist; he shrinks from pain and violence, and feels a real awe for authority. He thinks his sovereign is bigger in spirit; and so, in making him bigger in body, the artist is acting as a seer and philosopher, bringing out an inner truth. Such is the clue to the greater part of our present-day art standards; snobbery and subservience, timidity and worship of tradition, also bragging and strutting and beating of tom-toms. Every little tea-party poet and semi-invalid cherishes a strong and cruel dream—Nietzsche with his Blond Beast, and Carlyle

with his Hero-worship, and Henley with his Song of the Sword, and Kipling with his God of our Fathers, known of old, Lord of our far-flung battle-line.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LABORER AND HIS HIRE

Little by little we now begin to note the outlines of Ogi's art code. Two negative propositions we may consider as clear: Ogi does not paint the thing as it really is; and he does not paint the thing as he sees it. The former he could not do, for he does not know what the thing really is; and the second he would consider bad manners, bad morals and bad taste. Ogi paints the thing as he thinks it ought to be; or, more commonly, he paints the thing as he thinks other people ought to think it to be.

And now comes the question: Why, having chosen his subject, does Ogi idealize it according to one idea, and not according to another? Are such decisions matters of accident or whim? Assuredly not; for human psychology has its laws, which we can learn to understand. We ask: What are the laws of Ogi, his hand and his eye and his brain? What forces determine that he shall present his "reality" in this way and not in that?

The first thing to say is: Don't ask Ogi about it, for he cannot tell you. Ogi is not at all what he thinks he is, and does not produce his works of art from the motives he publishes to the world. We shall find that the fellow has been almost too shrewd—he has contrived a set of pretenses so clever that he has fooled, not merely his public, but himself. He who would produce a great work of art, said Milton, must first make a work of art of his own life. Ogi has taken this maxim literally, and got out a fancy line of trade-lies.

It is perfectly plain that the artist is a social product, a member of a tribe and swayed by tribal impulses. But you find him denying this with passion, and picturing himself as a solitary soul dwelling in an ivory tower, galloping through the sky on a winged horse, visited and directed by heaven-sent messengers, and wooed by mysterious lovely ladies called Muses. At the same time, however, he wants at least one lady love who is real; and this lady

love does not often share his interest in the imaginary lady loves. On the contrary, she is accustomed to point out the brutal fact that Ogi wants three good chunks of aurochs meat every twenty-four hours; also, the lady herself wants a little meat—and more important yet, she wants it served according to the best tribal conventions, those to which she was accustomed before she ran away and married an artist. The tribal law decrees that the glass on her table must be cut by hand, even though it is cut crooked; the linen on her table must be embroidered by hand, because, if it is done wholesale, by machinery, it is not "art."

Theoretically, it is possible for an artist to produce his art-works for the approval of the imaginary Muses; but as a matter of fact you find that the most solitary old Ogi has somebody, a faithful friend, or an old housekeeper, or even a child, whose approval he craves. Even an artist on a desert island will be thinking that some day a ship will land there; while young and rebellious artists produce for a dream public in the future. I myself did all my early work from that motive; and in Voltaire I came upon what seemed to me the cruelest sentence ever penned: "Letters to posterity seldom reach their destination!"

Ogi must have an audience. So, in his selecting, his idealizing, and his other varieties of feigning, he has always before him the problem: Will this please my public? And to what extent? And for how long? There is no birth control movement in Ogi's brain; vast numbers of dream children are born there, and he must select a few of them to be nourished and raised up to reality, while he sentences the others to be starved and buried.

Having become a professional, living by his work, Ogi is under the necessity of finding an audience that will feed him. And remember, it is not merely the three chunks of aurochs meat per day, and three more for Mrs. Ogi; it is the means of serving Mrs. Ogi's meat in the fashion her social position requires. Surely I do not have to prove the proposition that Ogi cannot produce beautiful and inspiring works of art while Mrs. Ogi is raising ructions in the cave!

So comes the great struggle in the artist's soul, a struggle which has gone on for three thousand, three

hundred and thirty-three generations, and may continue for as many more. Among the children of Ogi's brain are some he dearly loves, but who will not "sell." There are others whom he despises, but whom he knows the public will acclaim and pay for. "Which shall it be?"

The answers have been as various as the souls of artists. We shall see how through the ages there have been hero artists and martyr artists, men who have produced what they believed to be the best, in the face of obloquy, ridicule, starvation, even the dungeon and the stake. But, manifestly, these conditions are not the most favorable for the birth of masterpieces. To develop an art technique requires decades of practice and study. To feel other persons' emotions intensely and reproduce them according to some coherent plan; to devise new forms, and arrange millions of musical notes or words or molecules of paint in a complex design—all this requires intense and persistent concentration. Men cannot do such work without leisure; neither can they do it while they are despising themselves for doing it. So we may set down the following as one of the fundamental art laws:

*The bulk of the successful artists of any time are men in harmony with the spirit of that time, and identified with the powers prevailing.*

## CHAPTER V

### THE LORD'S ANOINTED

Who pays for art? The answer is that at every stage of social development there are certain groups able to pay for certain kinds of art. These groups may be large or small, but they constitute the public for that kind of art, and determine its quality and character; he who pays the piper calls the tune. It should need no stating that Rolls-Royce automobiles are not made according to the tastes of rag-pickers and ditch-diggers, nor yet of poets and saints; they are made according to the tastes of people who can afford to pay for Rolls-Royce automobiles. If our thinking about the arts were not so completely twisted by false propaganda, it would seem an axiom to say that the first essential to understanding any art product is to under-

stand the public which ordered and paid for that art product.

Some arts, of course, are cheaper than others. Ballads cost nothing; you can make one up and sing it on any street corner. Hence we find the ballad close to the people, simple and human, frequently rebellious. The same thing applies to folk tales and love songs—until men take to printing them in books, after which they develop fancy forms, understandable only to people who have nothing to do with their time except to play with fancy things.

Beginning with the primitive art forms, it would be possible to arrange the arts in an ascending scale of expensiveness, and to show that exactly in proportion to the cost of an art product is its aristocratic spirit, its subservience to ruling class ideals. Of all the art forms thus far devised, the most expensive per capita is the so-called "grand opera"; this grandeur has to be subscribed for in advance by the "diamond horseshoe," and consequently there has never been such a thing as a proletarian grand opera—if you except the "Niebelung Ring," which was so effectively disguised as a fairy story that nobody but Bernard Shaw has been able to decipher its incendiary message.

Many years ago I was talking with a captain of industry, prominent in New York political life. I spoke of the corruption of the judges, and he contradicted me with a smile. "Our judges are not bought; they are selected." And exactly so it has been with our recognized and successful artists; they have been men who looked up to the ruling classes by instinct, and served their masters gladly and freely. If they did not do so, they paid the penalty by a life of conflict and exile; if they happened to be poor and friendless, they do not even receive the gratitude of posterity, because their dream-children died unborn, and were buried, along with their parents, in graves unknown. "Some mute, inglorious Milton here may rest."

It will be our task to study the great art periods one after another, taking the leading artists and showing what they were, what they believed, how they got their livings, and what they did for those who paid them. We shall find that everywhere they were members of their group, sharing the interests and the prejudices, the hates and fears.

the jealousies and loves and admirations of that group. We shall find them subject to all the social stresses and strains of the time, and fighting ardently the battles of their class. For life is never a static thing, it is always changing, always subjecting its victims to new dangers, forcing them to new efforts. Either the ruling class is threatened by the attacks of outside enemies, or else there is a new class arising inside the community. In times of internal order and prosperity, there come luxury and idleness, the degeneration of the tribe; there come all sorts of novelties startling the elders—modernists sapping the old time creeds, and flappers adopting the vices of men.

Such evils must be corrected; such enemies of the tribe must be put down; and in the course of these labors, what chance is there that the ruling classes will fail to make use of their most powerful weapon, that of art? There is simply no chance whatever. Ogi will be called on by his masters; or else he will act of his own impulse—he will lead the crusade, singing the praises of the old time ways, "idealizing" the ancestral heroes, the holy saints and the founding fathers, and pouring ridicule upon the bobbed heads of the flappers. The critics will leap to Ogi's support, hailing him as the Lord's own anointed, a creator of masterpieces, dignified, serene, secure in immortality. This is art, the critics will aver, this is real, genuine, authentic art; while out there in the wilderness somewhere howls a lone gray rebellious wolf, attacking and seeking to devour everything that is beautiful and sacred in life—and the howling of this wolf is not art, it is vile and cheap propaganda.

The critics are certain that the decision is purely a question of aesthetics; and we answer that it is purely a question of class prestige. They are certain that art standards are eternal; and we answer that they are blown about by the winds of politics. Social classes struggle; some lose, and their glory fades, their arts decay; others win, and set new standards, according to their interests. The only permanent factors are the permanent needs of humanity, for justice, brotherhood, wisdom; and the arts stand a chance of immortality, to the extent that they serve such ideals.

## CHAPTER VI

### ARTIFICIAL CHILDHOOD

The reader who shares the art beliefs now prevalent in the world will be quite certain that the ideas here being expounded are fantastic and absurd. Among those who thus differ is a friend of mine, a very great poet who is patiently reading the manuscript and suffering, both for himself, and for all poets who will follow him. He writes: "There is and should be such a thing as the enjoyment of what we are pleased to term 'pure' beauty." And again: "You must believe either that we have a right to play, in which case the poet-who-doesn't-preach is justified, or believe the contrary, with its corollary of a coming race of solemn scientific monsters."

I do not want to gain an argument by the easy device of omitting everything that does not help me; therefore I take up this friend's contentions. Manifestly an element of play is essential to all art; it is what distinguishes art from other forms of expression, essays, sermons, speeches, mathematical demonstrations. If we do not emphasize this play element, it is not from failure to realize the difference between a work of art and an essay, a sermon, a speech or a mathematical demonstration; it is merely because the play element in art is recognized by everyone, to the exclusion of the element of rational thought and purpose, which is no less essential.

Let us ask: what is play? The answer is: play is nature's device whereby the young train themselves for reality. Two puppies pretending to bite each other's throats, learn to fight without having their throats torn in the process. So all young creatures develop their faculties; and this function is carried right up into modern art products. From many new novels I may learn, without risking the fatal experiment, what will happen to me if I permit the wild beast of lust to get me by the throat.

Let us have another principle, to guide us in our analysis:

*Art is play, having for its purpose the development of human faculties, and experiment with the possibilities of life.*

But notice this distinction. Two puppies, leaping at

each other's throats and dodging away, do not reason about what they are doing; they are guided by instinct. But a modern novelist knows what he is doing; he is thinking ordered thoughts about life, and making a deliberate record thereof. So we have a second principle:

*Art is play, to the extent that it is instinctive; it is propaganda when it becomes mature and conscious.*

Manifestly, art can never be entirely play, because no human being is entirely instinctive; nor can it be entirely propaganda—if it is to remain art, it must keep the play form. Moreover, the play element must be real, not simply a sham; the work must be a representation of life so skillful that we can pretend to take it for actuality. Wilkie Collins gave his formula for success as a fiction writer: "Make 'em laugh, make 'em cry, make 'em wait." In other words, make 'em do just what they would have to do, if they were taking part in actual life. This is the one indispensable element: the artist, by whatever trick, must persuade us that this is no trick, but reality.

The function of play in adults has been ably studied in Dr. Patrick's book, "The Psychology of Relaxation." We humans have only recently developed the upper lobes of the brain, and cannot stand using them all the time; it is necessary occasionally to let them rest, and to live in the lower centers; in other words, to go back into childhood and play. To my friend the Poet, who asks if I believe in play, I answer by pointing to my tennis racquet. But what shall we say about adults who play all the time? Modern science has a name for such people; it calls them morons.

If you are a moron artist, producing for a moron public, it will not avail to argue with you. But we have to inquire: how comes it that the art of morons is glorified and defended as "true" and "pure" art? How comes it that the quality of enjoyment without thought, which is characteristic of puppies and infants, comes to be considered a great quality in adults? In the fields of industry and education, we know that pitiful thing, the mind of a child in the body of a grown man. How comes it that such defective mentality is glorified in the field of art?

The answer is what you will expect from me. There is a class which owns and runs the world, and wishes everything to stay as it is. As one of the functions of

ownership, this class controls culture and determines taste. It glorifies the scholar, the man who walks backward through life; and likewise it glorifies the art-moron, the man who has emotions without brains.

The so-called "purity" of art is thus a form of artificial childhood. Just as the Chinese bind the feet of their women in order to keep them helpless and acquiescent, so ruling-class culture binds the imagination of the race so that it may not stride into the future. And if you think that those who run the world's thinking for the ruling class are not intelligent enough to formulate such a purpose as this—my reply is that you are as unintelligent as they would wish you to be, and you justify all the contempt they feel for you.

## CHAPTER VII

### MRS. OGI EMERGES

We now assume as demonstrated the following propositions. First:

*The artist is a social product, his psychology and that of his art works being determined by the economic forces prevailing in his time.*

And second:

*The established artist of any period is a man in sympathy with the ruling classes of that period, and voicing their interests and ideals.*

If this be true, the next step to the understanding of art, and the history of art periods past and present, is to understand the economic forces controlling mankind; the evolution and struggle of classes.

We get that far, when the argument is broken in upon by the particular Mrs. Ogi who inhabits the cave where this manuscript is produced. Says Mrs. Ogi: "In other words, you are going to give them your Socialist lecture."

Says Mrs. Ogi's husband: "But—"

Says Mrs. Ogi, who finishes her husband's sentences, as well as his manuscripts: "You promised me to write one book without propaganda!"

"But—" once more—"this is a book to prove that all books are propaganda! And can I conduct a propaganda for propaganda that isn't propaganda?"

"That depends," says Mrs. Ogi, "upon how stupid you are."

She goes on to maintain that the purpose of all propaganda is to put itself across; the essence of it being a new camouflage, which keeps the reader from knowing what he is getting. "If you imagine that people who take up a discussion of art standards are going to read a discourse on the history of social revolutions, I call you silly, and you aren't going to alter my opinion by calling me Mrs. Ogi."

"My dear," says the husband, in haste, "all that is not to be taken literally. Mrs. Ogi is the wife of the artist in general; she is the human tie that binds him to the group, and forces him to conform to group conventions."

"I know—like all men, you want to have it both ways. Everybody will assume—"

"I won't let them assume! It shall be explicitly stated that you are not Mrs. Ogi."

"Let it be explicitly stated that there has never been any hand-embroidered table-linen in this cave—never any sort of table-linen but paper napkins since I've been in it!"

"My dear," says Ogi, patiently, "you were the one who first pointed out to me the significance of hand-embroidered table-linen in the history of art. You remember that time when we went to the dinner-party at Mrs. Heavy Seller's—"

"Yes, I remember; and what you ought to do is to put that dinner-party into your book. Entitle your next chapter 'The Influence of Lingerie on Literature,' or, 'The Soul of Man Under Silk Hosiery.' "

"That's not bad," says Ogi, "I'll use it later. Meantime, I'll do my best to liven up the argument as you request." And so he retires and cudgels his brain, and comes back with a new chapter—bearing, not the dignified title of "The Evolution of Social Classes," as he had planned, but instead, a device to catch the fancy of the idle and frivolous—

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE HORSE-TRADE

Twenty-five years ago an American, himself a victim of the commercial system and dying of consumption, wrote a novel which contained a description of a horse-trade. The novel was rejected by many publishers, but came finally to one reader who recognized this horse-trading scene as the epitome of American civilization. He persuaded the author to rewrite the book, putting the horse-trade first, and making everything else in the novel subsidiary; this was done, and the result was the most sensational success in the history of American fiction. Young and old, rich and poor, high and low, all Americans recognized in the opening scene of "David Harum" the creed they believed in, the code they followed, the success they sought: they bought six hundred thousand copies of the book. I was young at the time, but I recall how all the people I knew were shaking their sides with laughter, discussing the story with one another, delighting in every step of the process whereby David got the better of the deacon.

Let us analyze this horse-trade, taking our data from the book. First, there is the lie of the seller, describing a horse which he believes to be useless. "He's wuth two hundred jest as he stands. He ain't had no trainin', an' he c'n draw two men in a road wagin better'n fifty." And second, there is the lie of the purchaser, as the purchaser himself boasts about it afterwards: "Wa'al, the more I looked at him, the better I liked him, but I only says, 'Jes so, jes so, he may be wuth the money, but jes as I'm fixed now he ain't wuth it to *me,* an' I hain't got that much money with me if he was,' I says."

So we see that in a horse-trade both the traders lie; and further we see that each pretends to be telling the truth, and makes an effort to persuade the other that he is telling the truth. Watching the ignoble process, we perceive that neither of the traders is ever sure how far his own lies are being accepted; nor is he sure what modicum of truth there may be in the other's lies. So each is in a state of uncertainty and fear. When the process has been completed, one trader has a sense of triumph, mingled with

contempt for the victim; the other trader has a sense of hatred, mingled with resolve to "get square."

It is further to be pointed out that this conflict of wits, this modern form of the duello, while it seems ruthless and cruel, yet has its own strict ethical code. David would lie to the deacon, but he would not pick the deacon's pocket, nor would he stab the deacon in the back, no matter how badly the deacon might have defeated him in commercial war. We observe also that the author feels under the necessity of persuading us that David would not have cheated the deacon unless he had first been cheated *by* the deacon; this being the conventional lie of the horse-trader turned novelist. We may also observe that next to the impulse to acquisitiveness, the supreme quality of this Yankee farmer, comes the impulse to sociability; having consummated his bargain, he tells his sister about it, and the humanness of the story lies not merely in the triumph of David, but in his pleasure in telling his sister. And observe that David tells her the truth without reservation. There might be other matters about which he would lie to his sister, but so far as concerns this horse-trade, he knows that she will not betray him to the deacon.

When the first savage offered a fish in exchange for a cocoanut, and made statements as to the freshness of the fish, and the difficulties and perils of fishing, the trade-lie was a comparatively simple thing. But in the process of industrial evolution, there have been developed so many variations and complexities that an encyclopedia of occupational deceptions would be required. Suffice it to say that the principle is understood in every nation and clime, being embodied in innumerable maxims and witticisms: *caveat emptor:* business is business; dog eat dog; the devil take the hindmost; look out for Number One; do others or they will do you; self-preservation is the first law of Nature. In a civilization based upon commercial competition, *laissez faire* and freedom of contract, the lie of the horse-trader becomes the basis of all the really significant actions of men and women.

So obvious is this, so clearly is it set forth in the wisdom of the race, that at first thought it seems surprising that anyone could be led into believing a trade-lie. But it is obvious that the test of a competent liar is that he gets himself believed; like the endless struggle between the

gun-maker and the armor-plate maker, is the struggle between the trader and his victim. The trader is aided by the fact that an impulse towards constructiveness has been planted in the human heart, which breeds a repugnance to dishonesty. So there are ideals and aspirations, religions, loyalties and patriotisms; there are the Christs and Galileos of history, the Parsivals and Don Quixotes of legend. As the trader himself puts it, there is a sucker born every minute. The trader kills a silly sheep, and puts the skin over his wolf's hide; so we have religious institutions and ethical systems, philanthropic endowments, professional codes, political platforms; we have honors, offices and titles, proprieties and respectabilities, graces, refinements, etiquettes and standards of good taste. Many of these things begin naively and in good faith; but in a society given up to commercial competition, and dominated by systems of greed, they all become trade-lies, and are used as weapons in the war of the classes.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CLASS LIE

In the stage of economic evolution where the savage exchanges a fish for a cocoanut, the balance of advantage in the trade may be equal. The fisherman may need the cocoanut as badly as the cocoanut-gatherer needs the fish. But as soon as we come to the stage where tokens are accepted, there begins a shifting of the balance of advantage; for the reason that the seller comes to specialize in the selling of one thing, whereas the more complex the society, the more different things the buyer must buy, and so he remains an amateur as to each. Moreover, the sellers learn to combine; they form partnerships, firms, corporations, alliances, leagues, associations, parties, classes; the buyer, on the other hand, remains unorganized and helpless. He is the consumer, who takes what he can get; he is the proletarian, who has only his chains to lose; he is that plaything of the competitive process, that jest of the trader through the ages, the general public. "The public be damned," said a great seller of railway transportation, and his phrase has become the corner-stone of capitalist civilization.

Nineteen hundred years ago a revolutionary economist remarked, "To him that hath shall be given; while from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." And this economic process is one which tends continually to accelerate, multiplying itself by geometrical progression. In present-day society, the sellers are nearly all organized, while labor is only ten per cent organized, and the ultimate consumer is not organized at all. We have thus the combination of a monopoly price with a competitive wage, and the surplus wealth of the world is drawn by automatic process into the hands of a small class. The world's selling power is now vested in combinations of capital, called "trusts," which present themselves in the aspect of enormous fortresses of lies.

Merely to give a catalogue of the various trade-lies embodied in the daily operations of such a "trust" would require a volume. There are so many kinds of lies that no one man can know them all. There are lies carried in the heads and embodied in the practice of petty chiefs of departments. There are lies so generally accepted and conventionalized that the very liars do not know them as such, and are amazed and wounded in the feelings when their attention is called to the truth. There are lies so complicated that highly trained lawyers have been paid millions of dollars to contrive them. There are lies so cleverly hidden that it would take the restoring of tons of burned account-books to prove them. There are lies so blazoned forth on billboards and in newspapers that they have become part of the daily thought of the people, and have given new words and phrases to the language.

So comes the next stage in the evolution of the trade-lie. The owners of trusts and combinations unite into parties, classes and governments for the defense of their gains. They combine and endow and perpetuate their trade-lies, making them into systems and institutions; and so we have the Lie Wholesale, the Lie Sublimated, the Lie Traditional, the Lie Classical; we have the Lie become Religion, Philosophy, History, Literature, and Art.

Turn back to Chapter II, and read the list of the six great art lies; you may now understand who made them and why. Lie Number One, the Art for Art's Sake lie, the notion that the end of art is in the art work, is a trade lie of the art specialist, the effort of a sacred caste to main-

tain its prestige and selling price. Lie Number Two, the lie of Art Snobbery, the notion that art is for the chosen few, and outside the grasp of the masses, is the same. Lie Number Three, the lie of Art Tradition, the notion that new artists must follow old models, is a self-protective device of those in power. Lie Number Four, the lie of Art Dilettantism, the notion that the purpose of art is entertainment and diversion, is a device of the culturally powerful to weaken and degrade those upon whom they prey; just as the creatures of the underworld get their victims drunk before they rob them. Lie Number Five, the lie of the Art Pervert, the notion that art has nothing to do with moral questions, is the same. Lie Number Six, the lie of Vested Interest, is the sum of all the other lies, of all the infinite cruelties of predatory, class-controlled culture.

The sarcastic critic will say that I make the artist an extremely knavish and dangerous person. My answer is that he may be, and frequently is, an amiable and guileless child. His knaveries are class knaveries, collective cruelties, conventions and attitudes to life which have been produced as automatic reactions to economic forces; the individual acquires them with no more conscious thought than is involved in the assimilation of his food. Ogi lies and pretends, he cheats, robs and murders, imaginatively speaking, by the same instincts that cause him to blink his eyes in a bright light.

## CHAPTER X

### MRS. OGI ORDERS JAZZ

Says Mrs. Ogi: "Well, I see you are having your way."

Now this is a sore subject in the cave. Each of the residents is absolutely certain that it is always the other who has his or her way; and each is able to cite chapter and verse, and frequently does so. However, at present Ogi has a guilty conscience, so he speaks softly. "I am almost through with my explanation of industrial evolution."

"Almost!" sniffs Mrs. Ogi. "How much more?"

"Well, I have to show how successive classes emerge and acquire power—"

"Until at last we see the inevitable triumph of the proletariat and the establishment of the Co-operative Commonwealth! That will be so new to your readers, and so delightfully exciting! And meantime they sit and wonder when the scandals begin."

"Scandals?" says Ogi. "Have I said anything about scandals?"

"You tell your readers you're going to turn the artists' pockets inside out and show what is in them! If you don't do it, they'll say, 'This show is a frost!'"

I mention that Mrs. Ogi was brought up in exclusive social circles, where never a breath of slang could pass her lips without some female relative raising a finger and whispering: "Hush!" But times are changing, and marriage becomes more and more a lottery.

Says Mrs. Ogi's husband: "Of course I intend to muck-rake individual artists—"

"Which artists?"

"Well, I have to begin at the beginning—"

"But you've already begun with the beginning of the world!"

"I have to begin now with the first significant art."

Mrs. Ogi's snort reminds her husband of the old days of the aurochs hunt. "What the American people want to know is how many thousand dollars a week Gloria Swanson is really getting, and what was Rupert Hughes' total income from 'The Sins of Hollywood.' Is all that to be put off to the end of your book?"

"But how can I deal with present-day art ahead of ancient art?"

"You make me think of those interminable English novels, which begin with the infancy of the hero, and get through public school at page three hundred and something!"

"But, my dear, there is some old literature that people are really interested in. The Bible for example—"

"The Hundred Best Books! Number two, Homer; number three, Shakespeare; Number four, Paradise Lost—"

"But you overlook the fact—the Bible is a best-seller!"

"The people who buy it are not people who read about

art, or would ever hear of a book on art theories. They are people like Mamma! Once upon a time a book-agent offered her a set of the World's Great Orations, and she decided the dark red leather binding would go well with the draperies in the drawing-room. Then a couple of weeks later came another man, selling a set of books in dark green cloth. She decided these would match the decorations in the billiard-room, so she bought them also, and it wasn't until afterwards that somebody noticed the family had two sets of the same World's Great Orations!"

"But, my dear, there really is literature in the Bible."

"People have been told about literature in the Bible since they were children in Sunday school, and there's no idea in the whole world that bores them quite so much."

"But that's exactly the point! That's what this book is for—to show how real literature was alive in its own day, and is just as much alive in the present day. Don't you see what a fascinating theme: they had in Judea the very same class struggle—"

There has come that fanatical light into his eyes which Mrs. Ogi knows so well; he means to make her sit and listen to a whole chapter—and when she has the laundry to count, and the apples to boil for his supper! "Go ahead and write it," she says, in a weary voice. "But take my advice and jazz it up!"

So Ogi goes away and postpones his exposition of the successive emergence of social classes; and instead of an impressive title such as "Agrarian Revolt in Ancient Judea," he begins—

## CHAPTER XI

### THE POPULIST CONVENTION

From the New York "Sun," July 4, the early 1890s:

KANSAS KICKING

*Cranks' Convention in Tumult at Topeka*

*Wild Asses of Prairie Bray*

*Millennium by Majority Vote Scheduled for Next November*

Topeka, Kan., July 3. (Special to the "Sun.") The open season for devil-hunting is on in Topeka today. From

Nemaha County on the North to Comanche on the South, from Cherokee County on the East to Cheyenne on the West, the hunters are pouring into their state capital; money-devil hunters and speculator-devil hunters, railroad-devil hunters and rum-devil hunters. The streets of the city swarm with them, the lobbies of the hotels are packed with them, spell-binders and oratorical wizards, political quack-doctors and prohibitionist cranks, long-haired men and short-haired women, partisans of free money, free land and free love. For months they have been looking forward to this convention, which is to wrest the powers of government from the hands of a predatory plutocracy; today, if there is a lunatic in Kansas who is not in Topeka, it is only because the Wall Street devil has got him behind bars in one of the asylums.

The lobby of the American House this evening is more like the menagerie tent of a circus than like anything else ever seen in the effete East. The convention opens at ten o'clock tomorrow morning, and tonight every orator has a last chance to save the nation before the platform is made up. Audiences are not necessary, everybody talks at once, and there are a dozen men delivering exhortations, standing on the leather seats of hotel-lobby chairs. Here is "Sockless" Jeremiah Simpson, expecting to be nominated for Congress tomorrow. Coatless and tieless, his collar wilted flat, he shouts to the corn-field cohorts his denunciations of the blood-sucking leeches which have picked the bones of the farmers of Kansas. Here is Isaiah Woe, weird figure having whiskers almost to his belt and pants almost to his shoe-tops, waving his skinny arms and justifying his surname—"Woe, woe, woe—woe unto this and woe unto that—woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the rights from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!"

Isaiah is known as a "prophet" among this prairie population; he roars the grievances of the dear peepul of the prairie-country, and shakes the hayseeds and corn-dust out of his white whiskers until his audience really believes it sees a halo about his head. He does not hesitate to claim divine inspiration, declaring to the mob: "The Lord

hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives."

Isaiah has no rival in lung-power, unless it be Micah, the Pottawatomie Prophet—"Mournful Mike," as he is known in the state capital. This aged replica of Uncle Sam is out on a cracker-box in front of the Elks' Club, and your reporter took down some of his sentences verbatim: "They build up Washington with blood, and New York with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money. . . . Therefore shall Washington for your sake be plowed as a field, and New York shall become heaps, and the buildings of Wall Street as the high places of a forest."

There is a regiment of such calamity howlers and kickers, thirsting for the blood of the money-devil. There is Elijah, known as the "boy orator" from Kiowa County, and Angry Amos, the "Wild Man of Neosho." There is one John, who calls himself the Baptist, and has adopted the singular habit of dipping his followers into water—though it must be stated that few of them show the effects after a blistering hot day in Topeka. It is reported and generally believed that the water-dipping prophet lives upon the locusts which infest the Kansas corn-fields, together with wild honey furnished by friendly bees in the cottonwoods along the creek bottoms. Apparently, however, the prophet has not brought along a supply of his customary provender, for your correspondent observed him this afternoon partaking of sinkers and coffee in the railroad restaurant, with a bunch of other wild asses from the prairie.

Kansas is scheduled to have a new political party tomorrow; a party of the peepul, to be run by prophets, none of whom will take their salaries when they get elected to office. And what is to be the platform of this party? Well, the government is to fix the price of wheat, and freight-rates are to be reduced to a point which will compel holders of railway securities to live on locusts and wild honey. All interest on money is to be abolished; the prophets of the Lord call it "usury," and the plank in their platform on the subject reads as follows:

"If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay

with thee, then thou shalt relieve him, yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee: Take thou no interest of him, or increase; but fear thy God that thy brother may live with thee. Thou shalt not give him any money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase."

And if that be not enough, bond slavery is to be forbidden by law, and beginning with the year 1900, and every fifty years thereafter, all debts are to be forgiven, and everybody is to have a fresh start. Well may Jabez Smith, chairman of the State Committee of the Republican party, watching this outfit of wild men and listening to their conglomeration of lunacy, lift up his hands and cry out: "Was ist los mit Kansas?" . . .

Such was news according to the New York "Sun" of Charles A. Dana's time; the sort of news from which I got all my political ideas during boyhood. Seven times every week I would read articles and editorials in that tone, and laugh with glee over them; and then, every Sunday morning and evening I would go to church, and listen while the preacher read the words of Jeremiah and Isaiah and Micah and Elijah and Amos and John the Baptist, and I would accept them all as the divinely inspired words of God. How was I, poor lad, to know that the very same prophets were back on earth, living the very same lives and making the very same speeches—trying to save America, as of old they had tried to save Judea, from the hands of the defilers and the despoilers?

## CHAPTER XII

### KANSAS AND JUDEA

How did it happen that political agitators, living in the Mississippi Valley at the end of the nineteenth century, were identical in spirit with religious prophets in Asia Minor five hundred years before Christ? The answer is that civilizations rise and fall, and history repeats itself. Let me describe one historic process, and you watch my statement phrase by phrase, and see if you can tell whether I am referring to ancient Judea or to modern Kansas.

A people traveled for a long distance, fleeing from

despotism and seeking religious liberty. They were a primitive, hardy people, having a stern faith in one God who personally directed their lives. They came to a rich land, and conquered it by hard fighting, under this personal direction of their God. They built homes, they gathered flocks and herds, they accumulated wealth; and they saw this wealth pouring into cities, to be absorbed by governing and trading classes. Their agricultural democracy evolved into a plutocratic imperialism. The landlords and the tax collectors left them nothing but a bare living; the fruits of their labor paid for palaces and temples with golden roofs, and for golden calves and monkey dinners, and rulers with a thousand chorus girls.

So there was revolt in the country districts, and one after another came prophets of discontent. Always these prophets were radical in the economic sense, voicing the wrongs of the poor and helpless, the widows and the orphans. Always they were conservative in the social and religious sense, calling the people back to simplicity and honesty of life, to faith in the one true God. Always they used the symbols of the old tribal creed; repudiating newfangled divinities such as Baal and Darwin, and gathering at Armageddon to battle for the Lord. Throughout their lives they were stoned and persecuted and covered with ridicule; when they died they became their country's glory, and their words were cherished and embodied in sacred records which school children were made to study.

Now, how much of that is Judea, and how much is Kansas?

Let us make clear the point, essential to our present argument, that from cover to cover the "Old Testament" is propaganda. Those who created it created it as propaganda, having no remotest idea of anything else. Nowadays our docile population reads it and accepts it as the literal inspired Word—not realizing that the book is divided between two kinds of propaganda, which exactly cancel each other: the propaganda of a ruling class, teaching reverence for kings and priests, and the propaganda of rebels, clamoring for the overthrow of these same kings and priests!

This Old Testament is also offered to us in the literature classes, so it will be worth our while to consider it from that point of view. Manifestly there is much of it

which never pretended to be literature. There are weary chronicles of the doings of kings, and lists of their sons and grandsons. You may find acres of this in our big libraries, but it is classified as genealogy, not literature. Likewise there are the laws of the Hebrews, which belong in the legal department. There are architectural specifications for the temple, and rules of hygiene—all important to a historian, but rubbish to anybody else. There are a great number of legends which are eternally delightful to children, stories of the creation and the fall of man, and of gods and devils and miracles, precisely as important as similar stories among the ancient Anglo-Saxons, or the ancient Greeks, or the ancient Egyptians, or the ancient Hopis.

Among these stories are a few which display fine feeling and narrative skill, and so for the first time we have literature. There is one attempt at a drama; it is crude and confused—any sophomore, having taken a course in dramatic construction at a state university, could show the author of the Book of Job how to clarify his theme and cut out the repetitions. But in the midst of such crudities is magnificent poetry, which our university courses have not yet taught us to equal. Likewise there is some shrewd philosophy—and it is amusing to note that our verbal inspirationalists accept the worldly-wise common sense of the Proverbs and the bleak cynicism of Ecclesiastes as equally divine with the fervor of Isaiah and the fanatical rage of Jeremiah.

Finally, there is some lyric poetry of a spiritual nature, this also full of repetition. If you are judging it as ritual, that is all right, because ritual is intended to affect the subconscious, and repetition is the essence of the process. The difference between ritual and literature is that the latter makes its appeal to the conscious mind, where a little repetition goes a long way.

Dr. Johnson was asked his opinion of the feminist movement in religion, and he said that "a woman preaching is like a dog walking on two legs; it is not well done, but we are surprised that it is done at all." I think that if we examine our judgments carefully, we shall find that our high opinion of ancient writings is on this basis. We do not really judge them by modern standards, any more than we judge a child by adult standards when he tries to

wield a pen, or a hoe, or an oar. Our pleasure in reading ancient writings is to note the beginnings of real thinking, of mature attitudes toward life. We say: "By George, those old fellows had a lot of sense after all!" But judging the Old Testament strictly, as literature, not as antiquity, I say that everything which is of serious value to a modern adult person could be gathered into an extremely small volume, certainly not over thirty thousand words, or four per cent of the total.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE COMMUNIST ALMANAC

From the "American Times" Sunday Review of Books, A. D. 1944

#### SATAN SANCTIFIED

*A New Religion Enters the Lists*

There come to the desk of a literary editor many volumes which could not by any stretch of the imagination be considered as literature. But they are printed and bound, and those who write them believe them of importance, and others may be of the same opinion. So it becomes the task of a reviewer to give an account of these volumes.

The book now before us came through the mails, bearing no indication as to the sender; and examination of the contents quickly reveals the reason. Those who print and circulate the volume know that in so doing they render themselves liable to the lethal gas chamber. Nevertheless, they are impelled by fanaticism to incur the risk, so here is the result on our desk. Technically, we believe the editor incurs penalties by keeping the volume, instead of turning it over to the police authorities. But it seems to us a matter of importance that the public should know what sort of material is now being circulated among the populace, and for that reason we give an account of the contents of the "Communist Almanac for 1944."

It is perhaps a natural tendency of the human mind, an inevitable process of history, that holders of proscribed opinions should see themselves as martyrs, and endeavor to capitalize their sufferings for political advantage. So, ever since the extermination of the Soviet gov-

ernment by the armed forces of the civilized world, the surviving Communists, hiding in forests and holes in the ground, have been seeing themselves as founders of a new religion. In this document which they now put before us, we find the creed and ritual of this monstrous perversion of the so-called proletarian mind, together with the biographies of its founder and the acts of its leading martyrs.

The founder is Nikolai Lenin, and, incredible as it may seem, this person has been selected for sanctification! A couple of years before his death, an almost successful attempt was made to assassinate him, and the bullets then shot into his body are said to have been the final cause of his death. That is sufficient to constitute martyrdom in the Soviet formula, and to entitle Vladimir Ulianov to become a legend. For a year after his death the Soviet government attempted to preserve his body in mummy form; but this kind of immortality being unattainable, the body was buried, and soon afterwards rumors began to spring up all over Russia to the effect that Lenin had come back to life, and was reappearing to his followers, giving them advice about the management of his Bolshevik dictatorship. That was a miracle; so now Lenin is a divine personage, and those who died in the faith of the "proletarian" revolution are martyrs and saints. At least, that is the thesis of the "Communist Almanac for 1944."

The volume opens with no less than four biographies of the founder, alleged to have been composed by different followers who knew him intimately, Mattiu Shipinsky, Marco Sugarmann, Luka Herzkovitz, and Ivan Petchnikoff. The last, it appears, is a kind of philosopher, and provides for the Bolshevik cult the mantle of a mystical and metaphysical system. It is amusing to note that the four biographies go into minute detail—and differ as to many of these details! They purport to quote their founder verbatim—and his words on the same occasions are seldom the same words! Most absurd yet, they cannot even agree about his ancestry! In fact, they cannot agree about anything, except that he was the most remarkable person who has ever lived on earth, the bearer of a new revelation to mankind.

Following the biographies, the "Almanac" proceeds to a long recital of the doings of various propagandists of

the cult, their travels over the world in the interest of the "class struggle," and the persecutions to which they were subjected in various countries. It is a melancholy duty to record that among these emissaries of disaster were several of American birth and ancestry. One of the easy ways of achieving sanctification under the Bolshevik system is to be bitten by a body-louse, and to die of typhus. So among the Soviet apostles we find the figure of John Reed, graduate of Harvard University, and traitor to his country and his race.

Next we have various communications from these agents of social chaos, addressed to their deluded followers. This part of the volume is almost comical, in the solemnity with which these precious words are recorded and preserved for the benefit of posterity. Needless to say, the communications contain exhortations to the party members to remain steadfast in the faith, and to carry the message to their fellow "wage-slaves." This portion of the volume is known as the "Epistles"—the word "epistle" being Russian for letter.

Finally, there is a collection of miscellaneous prophesyings, attributed to a former commissar under the Russian Bolshevik government. All we can say concerning this part of the volume is that we have been unable to find out what it means, and it seems destined to serve as an inspiration to all the lunatics and would-be prophets of the next two thousand years. It is called "Revelations," and closes the amazing volume.

We think the time has come when public sentiment should make plain that the present laxity of the Department of Justice toward Communist agitators, and the whole tribe of "parlor Bolsheviks" and "pinks," will no longer be tolerated. We should be sorry to see this country return to the old days of the Democratic and Republican parties, and the oil scandals of the Harding-Coolidge era. But when we read a collection of perversities such as this "Communist Almanac," we cannot but sigh for the return of Palmer and Daugherty, when red-blooded hundred per cent Americans set to work with vigor to preserve their country from the fanatical propagandists of class greed.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GOD'S PROPAGANDA

We have before us another literary criticism, clipped from the "Roman Times Weekly Review of Books" during the year 300, under the Emperor Diocletian. It is word for word the same as that from the "American Times" of 1944—the only difference being that one deals with an outlaw party known as Bolsheviks, while the other deals with an outlaw sect known as Christians. The Founder of this latter sect is described by the "Roman Times" as a proletarian criminal, who was crucified for disturbing the public peace under the Emperor Augustus Cæsar. His followers have been hiding in catacombs and tombs, carrying on incessant propaganda in defiance of the Roman law. In place of John Reed, the "Roman Times" refers to a certain Paul, a renegade Roman gentleman and former official of the empire. The good old days to which the "Roman Times" looks back with longing, are the days of Nero, when these incendiary fanatics were boiled in oil or fed to the lions. Under the prodding of this most respectable "Times," the Emperor Diocletian undertook a new and ferocious persecution of the sect; but twenty-four years afterwards the successor of Diocletian became converted to Christianity, and adopted it as the official religion of the state, entitled to persecute other religions.

The reader who is a Christian will remind me that Jesus was a pacifist, he was meek and gentle. To this I answer, the early social revolutionists were likewise Utopians, appealing to love and brotherhood. At the time the New Testament became fixed in its present form, the Christians had never held power in any part of the world. When they took power under the Emperor Constantine, they behaved like every government in history—that is, they kept their power, using as much force as necessary for the purpose. If the reader is shocked by the fact that the Soviet government of Russia fought for two years a defensive war on twenty-six fronts against its enemies, I invite him to consider the Christian crusades, two centuries of offensive propaganda warfare. If he is shocked by stories he has read about the Tcheka and its torturing

of prisoners, I invite him to consult Lea's "History of the Spanish Inquisition." Considering the series of religious wars which made of Europe a shambles for more than a thousand years, it is safe to assert that for every human life sacrificed by the Soviet revolution in Russia, a hundred thousand lives have been taken in the name of the gentle and lowly Jesus.

But these are questions which will not be settled in a generation, nor in a century; therefore we pass on, and take up the question of the New Testament as literature. It has been generally so recognized, and we may doubt if any writing ever collected in one volume has exercised as great an influence upon the human race. And let it be noted that this literature is propaganda, pure and simple; we may defy anyone to find a single line in the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, or the Book of Revelations which was not produced as conscious and deliberate propaganda.

A critic highly regarded by the academic authorities when I was a student in college was George Henry Lewes. I read his "Life of Goethe," and made note of his argument on behalf of "realist" as opposed to "idealist" art. Goethe and Shakespeare are his examples of the former type; and how obvious is their superiority to those "subjective" artists, who "seek in realities only visible illustrations of a deeper existence!" The critic takes as his test the production of "the grandest generalizations and the most elevated types"; but it was evident to me, even in my student days, that he reached his conclusion by the simple device of overlooking the evidence on the other side. I introduce to you four "idealist" artists who bear the names—perhaps pen-names—of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Will anyone maintain that the works of Shakespeare and Goethe contain "grander generalizations" or "more elevated types" than the Four Gospels? We set Jesus against Shakespeare, and Buddha against Goethe, and leave it for the common sense of mankind to decide.

## CHAPTER XV

### MRS. PRESTONIA ORDERS PLUMBING

When I was a young man, groping my way into Socialism, I discovered that the movement in and about New York had a patroness. Mrs. Prestonia Martin was her name, and she had a beautiful home in the suburbs, and another up in the Adirondacks. An assortment of well-bred radicals would gather, and wait on themselves at table, and do their own laundry, and scratch a bit in the garden, and feel they were on the front door-step of the Co-operative Commonwealth. John Martin had been a member of the Fabian Society in London, so we knew we were under the best possible auspices, doing the exactly correct advanced things.

But time committed its ravages upon the minds of my friends Prestonia and John. They lost their vision of the Co-operative Commonwealth, and when you went to the beautiful "camp" overlooking Keene Valley, you no longer met young radicals, and no longer helped with the laundry; you met sedate philosophers, and listened to Prestonia expounding the mournful conclusion that humanity had never made any advance. The couple took up a new crusade—to avert from womankind the horrors of politics. The last time I met John, just before the war, he was an entirely respectable member of the New York school board and smiled at me a patronizing smile when I ventured to prophesy that inside of ten years women would be voting in New York state. "You will never live to see that!" said the prophet John.

The psalmist expresses the wish that "mine enemy would write a book"; and in this case mine enemy's wife committed the indiscretion. I have before me a scholarly-looking volume, published in 1910, entitled "Is Mankind Advancing?" by Mrs. John Martin. I cite it as an outstanding example of one variety of culture superstition; it reduces to absurdity the arguments of one group of tradition worshipers. My old friend Prestonia has discovered that the Greeks achieved a higher civilization than has ever since existed on earth, and her demonstration that mankind is not advancing is based on the exaltation

of Greek civilization over everything that has since come along.

Mrs. Prestonia does not really know very much about Greek civilization; I can state that, because I had many discussions with her at the time she was writing this book. What she has done is to take a history of Greece and list the leading names, higgledy-piggledy, regardless of their ideas, or of the parts they played, regardless of the fact that they fought and even killed one another, regardless of the fact that their doctrines contradict and cancel one another. They were Greeks, and therefore they were great. Two or three hundred are listed, all men of genius; and what names can you put against them?

I ventured to suggest a number of names to my friend Prestonia; but you see, my men were modern men, vulgar, common fellows who wore trousers, and ate pie, and worked for dollars! Think of comparing Edison with Archimedes—could anything be more absurd? Think of comparing Pasteur with Hippocrates! "But, my dear lady," I would argue, "Hippocrates believed that disease was caused by 'humors'; he believed that crises in disease followed numerical systems." Maybe that was true, said Prestonia, but nevertheless, Hippocrates was the greatest physician that ever lived. And she would have Socrates listed as one of the glories of Athenian civilization—in spite of the fact that Athenian civilization had compelled him to drink the hemlock! In her queer hall of fame the imperialist Pericles, who led his country to ruin, and was convicted of the theft of public money, takes rank as the greatest statesman in all history, outranking Lincoln, who saved the American Union, and freed several million slaves. A dissolute young despot, Alexander, who sighed for new worlds to conquer, outranks George Washington, who founded a nation of free men, and then retired to his plantation.

After running over the list of all the achievements of modern literature and art, politics and philosophy, science and industry, I was able at last to find one thing which my friend Prestonia was unwilling to get along without. She wanted to live in ancient Athens—but to have her modern plumbing! And never once had it occurred to her that plumbing means lead and copper and steel and brass and nickel and porcelain and paint! Also mills in which these

things are produced, railroads or motor trucks on which they are transported, factories in which the cars and trucks are made! Also telegraph and telephone and electric light, and bookkeeping systems and credit systems, and capital and labor, and the Republican party and the Socialist movement!

All this is preliminary to a study of the literature and art of ancient Greece; to help us clear our minds of cant, and persuade us to face the question: how much do we really admire Greek literature and Greek art, and how much do we just pretend to admire it? How much is the superiority of Greek civilization a reality, and how much is it a superstition maintained by gentlemen who have acquired honorific university degrees, which represent to them a meal ticket for the balance of their sojourns on earth?

## CHAPTER XVI

### MRS. OGI ORDERS ETIQUETTE

"Well," says Mrs. Ogi, "I see you have got down to the scandal."

Her husband looks pained. "Do you call that scandal?"

"You accept people's hospitality, and then come away and ridicule them, and reveal secrets about how they got the family washing done—"

"Secrets!" cries Ogi. "But that was a reform movement, a crusade!" After reflection, he adds: "If I really wanted to tell scandals, I could do it. I might hint that John lost his faith in the radical movement as a result of auto-intoxication."

"Well, all I can say is that if you tell that, I'll never speak to you again."

Ogi answers meekly, "Excuse me." And then: "What do you think of my thesis?"

"Well," says Mrs. Ogi, "I see, of course—you are trying to irritate and shock people as much as possible. Are you going to say that Greek art is propaganda?"

"I can't possibly help saying it."

"You know that this art is always cited as the perfect type of pure art, the expression of joy and love of beauty."

"The Greeks were a beauty-loving race and a joy-seeking race, and they embodied their ideals in the figures of gods and goddesses—extremely lovely figures. No one can do better with the human body than they did; but if you take those divinities on their good looks, you'll simply be repeating the bitter mistake of the Greeks—and without their excuse of inexperience."

Says Mrs. Ogi: "We're to have a Christian sermon on naked marble idols?"

"We are going to understand the total art product of the Greeks, to draw out of it what they put into it. These people constituted themselves an experiment station to try out beauty-loving—that is, trust in Nature—as a basis of civilization; and they found it didn't work. It led them into pain and failure and despair, and the record is written all over their art. There is a book, Mackail's 'Greek Anthology,' a collection of various kinds of inscriptions, brief verses and sentiments from all sources; and you search the pages and hardly find one happy word. You discover that their art was to put sadness into beautiful and melodious language. 'Of all things,' says Theognis, 'it is best for men not to be born.' And Anacreon, poet of the joy-lovers, compares life to a chariot wheel that 'runs fast away.'"

"Well, but so it does!"

"Something endures, and we have to find out what. We have to take hold of life, and learn to direct it; we cannot just play in a garden, like happy children. The Greeks played, and their garden turned into a charnel-house, a place of horror. I call it an amazing blunder of criticism—the notion that Greek art is one of joy and freedom. The culmination of their art impulse was the tragedies which the whole community helped to create and maintain. These performances were religious ritual, their supreme civic events; and what do they tell us? There is one theme, immutably fixed, the helplessness of the human spirit in the grip of fate. A black shadow hangs over the life of men, they grope blindly in the darkness. Whole families, mighty dynasties of kings and rulers are condemned to destruction. They are pursued by bitter and fierce and relentless Nemesis. Somber prophecies are spoken before men are born, and then we see these men, striving with all their wit to evade their

destiny—in vain. Our pleasure as spectators is to watch this process, and be convinced of the helplessness of our kind. We are lifted up to the heaven of the gods, we are endowed with omniscience and omnipotence—in order to drive a dagger into our own bosoms, to cohabit with our own mothers and sisters, to stab our own fathers and brothers, to tear out our own eyeballs. Enacting such things with majesty and solemnity, reciting them in melodious language to the rhythm of beautiful music and the graceful motions of a chorus—that is the final achievement of these lovers of beauty and joy!"

"You are becoming eloquent," says Mrs. Ogi, who distrusts eloquence in her cave. "What conclusion do you draw about this art?"

"We are physicians, called to a case after the patient is dead. We want to know what killed this man, so that we can advise living patients. From this post-mortem we learn that sensuous charm does not suffice to secure life; it is not enough for people to carve beautiful figures of the nude human body, and build marble temples to joy and love, while their civic affairs are full of jealousy and greed and corruption."

"Was there corruption in Greek public life?"

"So much that we in modern times cannot conceive it. Yes, I know about the Teapot Dome and the black satchel with a hundred thousand dollars worth of bills. Nevertheless, if anyone were to tell us about corruption such as the Greeks took for granted, not even a movie audience would swallow it."

"Now that sounds interesting," says Mrs. Ogi. "Tell us scandals about these reverend ancients!"

"First I want to explain the class struggle in Greek society, and the economic basis of their state—"

"You take my advice," says Mrs. Ogi; "leave that lecture until the end, and then forget it. Take your muck-rake and poke it into the Parthenon!"

"What I want to do," says Ogi, "is to take a character out of ancient Greece, and set him down in our world and see how he'd sound to us. Something like this—

## CHAPTER XVII

### WILLIAM RANDOLPH ALCIBIADES

From "The American Plutarch: Our Leading Statesmen Portrayed for the Young; with Moral Inferences." New York: A. D. 2124.

The career of William Randolph Alcibiades, publisher, soldier and politician, coincided with the era of the Great Wars. He was born to a position of power and luxury, being a nephew of the greatest statesman of his time, and having as his private tutor the leading philosopher of his time. He had rare gifts of personal beauty and charm; but his youth was wild and dissipated, and he spurned the conventional career which lay open to him, and set himself up as a leader of the Democratic party. His enemies called him a demagogue, and denied him any sincerity in his popular appeals.

In the first World War the young statesman was chosen commander-in-chief of the American forces in France. Returning home, he organized and led the expedition for the conquest of South America, and laid siege to the city of Buenos Ayres. He was recalled, because his enemies charged that on the night before the expedition sailed, he had committed an act of sacrilege by chopping off the nose of the statue of George Washington in front of the Treasury Building, New York. History will never know who committed this vandalism; a young man confessed, and some of those whom he charged with guilt were executed, but the enemies of William Randolph maintained that he had purchased this confession, in order to get rid of certain persons who stood in his way.

William Randolph, while being conducted back to his country under arrest, made his escape to England. In order to punish his enemies at home, he made fervent appeals to the British government to enter the war on the side of South America, and against his own country. His eloquence prevailed, and both England and France sent ships to the relief of Buenos Ayres. But William Randolph had to flee from England to France, because the English king made the discovery that the young American had seduced his wife.

William Randolph now lived in retirement until the

second World War broke out—between the United States on the one hand, and Japan and China, aided by England and France, on the other. William Randolph had always been ardent in promoting hostility against Japan, but he now fled to the court of the Japanese emperor, and with money furnished by this wealthy monarch he sent emissaries to foment a conspiracy in the United States. The conflict between the Republican and Democratic parties had reached a stage of such bitterness that the wealthy classes were ready to listen to any scheme which promised them power. William Randolph having deserted the Democrats and gone over to the Republicans, his agents approached the naval officers of the fleet, and these, combined with Judge Gary and J. P. Morgan and other gentlemen of wealth, overthrew the established government, and set up a new constitution, which confined the voting power to five thousand of the richest citizens.

The new government made an alliance with Japan and China against England and France; and William Randolph returned to the United States and became a general in command of the American army. But his failure to win victories caused his popularity to wane, and he fled to a castle he had built for himself in Mexico. The British government, enraged by what he had done to turn the Japanese emperor against them, sent emissaries to set fire to his castle, and William Randolph Alcibiades was shot while trying to make his escape from the flames.

From this career we learn that it is not enough for a statesman to be beautiful in person and charming in manner: it is also necessary that he be taught to attend Sunday school in his youth.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE AGE OF HERO-WORSHIP

Greek civilization was made by a large number of different tribes, inhabiting islands, or fertile valleys and plains separated by mountain ranges. Among these tribes there was incessant rivalry and bitter jealousy. They were never able to form a national or racial union, and their history is a succession of inter-tribal intrigues and wars. In addition to this came the class struggle. The aristo-

cratic classes, based on landlordism, held the government, while the proletariat, crowding into the towns, clamored for power; popular leaders arose, and there were conspiracies and civic tumults. Invariably the leaders of the dispossessed party would form alliances with outside states for war upon their own state. More significant yet, some would take the money and serve the cause of the Persian kings, who represented barbarian despotism.

In the beginning of their written record we find the Greeks just emerging from the family stage. The old men ruled; they were the wise and the rich, and no one disputed their authority. They formed alliances and led expeditions for the plundering of other states; then, returning to their ancestral halls, they hired musicians to entertain them by chanting the story of their exploits. So we have the Homeric poems, ruling-class propaganda, written to glorify the ancestors of powerful chieftains and fighting men, and to inculcate the spirit of obedience and martial pride in the new generations.

Every device of the poet's art is employed to lend prominence and splendor to the Homeric heroes. They are frequently demigods, the result of some mood of dalliance on the part of one of the high gods of Olympus, who came down to earth and encountered a lovely Greek maiden wandering in a meadow. This divine illegitimacy entitles the heroes to the center of the stage, and they take it. They are a set of extremely greedy, jealous, vain and capricious school-boys; and, what is still more significant, their gods, the highest ideal they could conceive, are exactly as greedy, jealous, vain and capricious. The only beautiful emotion in the poems is when some of the mothers and fathers, the wives and children of those heroes express for them an affection of which they are unworthy.

We are accustomed to use the words "Homeric" and "epic" to signify something vast, elemental, portentous. How is it that Homer secures to his characters this "heroic" effect? By causing all the rest of the world to bow to their pretensions, by interesting the gods in their fate—and, above all else, by portraying them as unrestrained in their emotions and limitless in their desires. These are the familiar devices whereby aristocracy signifies itself.

And that explains why such men as Matthew Arnold

and Gladstone write volumes of rhapsody over Homer. There is in England a class which has invented ways of setting forth to the world the fact that it does not have to work for a living. There are things this class can do which the vulgar herd cannot do; and one of these things is to read and appreciate Latin and Greek literature. Homer is to the British world of culture what the top-hat is to the British world sartorial.

Homer serves these purposes, because he has the aristocratic point of view, and gives the aristocratic mind what it craves. Just as we cherish genealogy volumes to prove that our ancestors came over in the *Mayflower,* so the Homeric minstrel chanted a catalogue of the ships which had taken part in the Trojan war. And just as our members of good society preach "law and order" to the lower classes, so in the Homeric poems it is made clear that the common soldier exists to shed his blood for the glory of his chief. Only once does a common man lift his voice in the "Iliad"—the famous scene in the council where Thersites dares to rise up. He is represented as a hunchbacked and offensive brawler; he is overwhelmed with ridicule, and finally receives a sound thrashing from Ulysses, called "the wily," the Greek ideal of the shrewd and sensible man of the world. "The sovereignty of the many is not good," declares this "wily" one; "let there be one sovereign, one king."

We shall find that the bards of aristocracy seldom neglect to flatter their masters by showing some rebel thus being taught his place. We shall find Shakespeare treating Jack Cade precisely as Homer treats Thersites; neither stopping for a moment to inquire whether the grumbler had any just cause to grumble. We shall find also that leisure-class critics always accept these scenes as pure and undefiled "art," and are shocked by the suggestion of their mighty minstrels stooping to propaganda in the interest of those who pay them. In those early days the pay was poor; if legend is to be trusted, Homer wandered blind and friendless among the Greek towns, which afterwards claimed the honor of being his birthplace. Says the epigram:

> Seven wealthy towns contend for Homer dead,
> Through which the living Homer begged his bread.

Taking the "Iliad" on the basis of literature, we say it contains fine poetry, and vivid pictures of old-time manners, fascinating to read about—if you come on them while you are young. There is a stage of life when we are naïve and uncritical in our acceptance of "heroism." We adopt a certain shining person, we share his glories, we go out to battle with him, we thrill to every stroke of his broad sword, we shout when he wins the victory—and never reflect that we might exactly as well be interested in the other fellow, who has exactly as much right to survive. The average person reaches that age of hero-worship at twelve years, and passes it at sixteen, if he passes it at all. Let children read the "Odyssey" in a good translation; they will enjoy these perils and later on they will discover that the universe has not yet been entirely explored—there are perils in the starry spaces, and in the deeps of our minds.

## CHAPTER XIX

### HUNDRED PER CENT ATHENIAN

Once in their history fate provided the Greeks with a great cause; that was in the fifth century, when the gigantic Juggernaut of Persia came rolling down upon them. King Xerxes assembled his barbarian hordes, his tribes of wild horsemen and his phalanxes of slaves, his war elephants and his chariots. Compared with these invaders, the Greeks were modern civilized men; free men, holding in their minds all the treasures of the future. They forgot their state jealousies and civic factions, and rallied and saved their culture. From that national impulse came practically everything that is worth while in the "classics." It was here that the Greek spirit achieved self-consciousness; it was here that Greek patriotism and Greek religion found their justification, their validity as propaganda for great art.

Among the Athenian captains who fought at Marathon was one by the name of Æschylus. He returned, full of the pride of his race, and wrote a tragedy, "The Persians," around the story of the king whom he had helped to defeat; the climax of the drama being the battle in which the poet had been a leader. It was Greek patri-

otic and religious propaganda without any thought of disguise; its purpose being to portray the downfall of despotism. The play was a popular success, and made Æschylus the national poet, not merely of Athens, but of all the Greeks.

He wrote other plays of the same religious and patriotic sort, and he never feared to put in whatever moral teachings he thought his audience needed. "Obedience is the mother of success, bringing safety," summed up his political creed; so, needless to say, he belonged to the conservative party. So little was he afraid of "propaganda" that in "The Seven Against Thebes" he praised by name the statesman Aristides, who was present in the audience. This kind of topical illusion "brought down the house" in ancient Athens, precisely as it would in New York today.

The sculptors and architects and other artists of Greece felt the same patriotic and religious thrill, the same consciousness of a sublime destiny; they labored with burning faith to glorify the gods and demigods, the ancestors and rulers who had made them masters of the land. As a memorial to the victory of Marathon the Greeks instituted national games, which took place every four years, and were a means of uniting the various tribes in worship of their gods. There was the keenest rivalry, and the ambition of Greek gentlemen was to win the crowns and laurel wreaths. When they had won, they wanted the fact to be known; so they paid poets who could sing their achievements in glorious verses. The poet Pindar became a high-class publicity man for these aristocratic sportsmen; also he sang the praises of whatever tyrants held power in the Greek cities, making them splendid and heroic, regardless of how unprincipled and cruel they might be.

The production of the dramas was also a kind of game. Each playwright found a wealthy patron to pay the expenses of drilling and equipping the chorus for his play; then, if the play carried off the prize, the wealthy gentleman built a monument to his own generosity; and so we saw, lining the streets of Athens, the choregic monuments of Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller and Otto H. Kahn. Each poet seeking the prize would take the demigods and ancestral rulers, and portray them

according to his own interpretation; incidentally he would use the chorus to discuss the current events of politics, and to express his own convictions. Thus Æschylus wrote his "Eumenides" to oppose the abolishing of the Areopagiticus, an ancient court which met on the Sacred Hill: just as if today a poet should produce a drama to combat the radical attacks on the United States Supreme Court.

Another dramatist arose, the son of a noble family, Sophocles by name. He wrote some thirty plays, and carried off the prize nineteen times, and his rivals and enemies took pleasure in charging that he was greedy for money, a regular old miser, besides being exceptionally fond of the ladies, and raising a large illegitimate family. Sophocles produced serene and beautiful works, because he believed in the patriotic and pious traditions he served, accepting the hideous stories of the old-time Greek heroes and demi-gods as the natural fate of mortals. He is the perfect type of the ruling-class artist who achieves perfection without strife, because he is completely at one with his environment, identifying the interests of his class with the will of the gods. We shall encounter a line of such poets—Virgil, Spenser, Shakespeare, Racine, Goethe, Tennyson. They feel love and pity for the unhappy children of their brains, and they move us to grief and awe, but never do they move us to revolt.

But now came another dramatist, in a different mood. This man looked at the Greek legends and decided that they were not true. He looked at Greek institutions, private property, and state patriotism, and the sovereignty of old men in family and tribe, and he decided that these were not necessarily wise and permanent arrangements. He set himself up as a propagandist of things that we call "modern," and that the Greeks called blasphemy and infidelity. His name was Euripides, and he took the heroes and heroines of the old legends and turned them into plain human beings, suffering the cruelties of fate, but fighting back, voicing protests and doubts. So came a string of plays, jeering at militarism and false patriotism, denouncing slavery and the subjection of women in the home, rebuking religious bigotry, undermining the noble and wealthy classes. A play in which the women get together to rebel against war! A play in which a devoted

wife gives her life to an angry god in order to save her husband's life—but the husband is shown as an egotistical cad, not worthy of this dutiful and pious Greek sacrifice! Read a passage of the dramatic propaganda of Euripides, and realize how this must have sounded to hundred per cent Athenian patriots—and right in the midst of a war to the death with Sparta:

> Doth some one say that there be gods above?
> There are not; no, there are not. Let no fool,
> Led by the old false fable, thus deceive you.
> Look at the facts themselves, yielding my words
> No undue credence; for I say that kings
> Kill, rob, break oaths, lay cities waste by fraud,
> And doing thus are happier than those
> Who live calm pious lives day after day.
> How many little states that serve the gods
> Are subject to the godless but more strong,
> Made slaves by might of a superior army!

## CHAPTER XX

### THE FUNNY MAN OF REACTION

Needless to say, the Bolshevik sentiments of Euripides were not proclaimed before the altar of Dionysus without protest on the part of the orthodox. There rose up another dramatist, this time a comedian, to champion the ancient and honorable traditions of Athens. Aristophanes was his name, and he was one of the world's great masters of the comic line. He had infinite verve and wit and imagination; you can read him today and laugh out loud—even while his reactionary ideas make you cross.

The point to be got clear is that right or wrong, this poet is altogether a propagandist; a political campaigner, full of the most bitter fury against his enemies, attacking them by name, lampooning them, ridiculing them, not scrupling even to tell vicious falsehoods about them. He wrote his plays to advocate this thesis or that thesis; he arranged his incidents to exhibit this or that aspect of the thesis; he chose his characters, either to voice his own convictions, or to make the opposite convictions absurd. Not merely do his characters make long speeches in which they set forth the poet's ideas; at any time in the course

of the action the poet will wave these characters one side, and step out in the form of the chorus and say what he thinks, arguing and pleading with the audience, scolding at them, denouncing his enemies, explaining his previous actions, discussing his present play—even going so far as to explain to the audience why they should award the prize to Aristophanes and not to somebody else! I doubt if there has ever been a bolder propagandist using the stage; I doubt if the propertied classes and the partisans of tradition ever had a more vigorous defender; and this, don't fail to note, in a world dramatist, a "classic" of history's greatest "art for art's sake" period!

The amazing modernness of Aristophanes is what strikes us most. There is hardly a single one of our present-day contentious questions he does not discuss at length. He has the malicious wit of the New York "Sun" in the days of Dana; he has the fun of Stephen Leacock, whose comical tales ridicule every new and sensible idea the human mind can conceive. Again, one thinks of the verses of Wallace Irwin—except that Aristophanes sincerely held his convictions, whereas Mr. Irwin's wit appears to be directed by his newest publisher.

Aristophanes was a gentleman, in the English sense of the word, and wrote for other gentlemen. Just as in England during the late war we observed the manufacturers of beer and munitions rising to power and turning the aristocracy out of their castles, so during the Peloponnesian war Aristophanes saw his cultured class dispossessed by newly rich traders. There is a scene in the "Knights" in which he denounces them; they are "mongers," a whole succession of "mongers"—topical allusions which the audience received with roars of laughter. First came a rope-monger to govern the state, and then a mutton-monger; now there was a leather-monger—Cleon, ruler of the city, who sat in the audience and heard himself abused. Athens could go only one stage lower, said Aristophanes, and he produced an offal-monger, and recited to this person a list of his vices, which proved him fit to take charge of public affairs.

As to Cleon, the poet objected that his political manners were rude; and in order to set him a good example,

described him as "a whale that keeps a public house and has a voice like a pig on fire!" This was in war-time—and imagine what would have happened to a playwright who produced a play in Washington, D. C., in the year 1918, describing the President of the United States in similar language!

Again, Aristophanes produced a play denouncing his city for its shabby treatment of its tributary states. He produced this play while ambassadors from those states were in the audience, attending a council of the empire. For this Cleon had the poet prosecuted and fined; so in his next production Aristophanes comes back, proposing that the people shall kick out a number of rascals, including

> All statesmen retrenching the fees and the salaries
> Of theatrical bards, in revenge for the railleries,
> And jests, and lampoons, of this holy solemnity,
> Profanely pursuing their personal enmity,
> For having been flouted, and scoff'd, and scorn'd—
> All such are admonish'd and heartily warn'd!

Aristophanes loathed Euripides for having turned the ancestral heroes into weak mortals, with sentiments and whinings about their rights and wrongs. He dragged the poet down into hell, and there beat him with all the weapons he could lay hold of. He took the poet's play of feminism, the "Lysistrata," and turned it to farce by that most modern of devices, a strike of mothers! A play in which the women of Athens refuse to co-habit with their husbands until the husbands have ended the war with Sparta!

Also Aristophanes loathed Socrates, because that philosopher taught the youths of Athens to think for themselves. To this the poet attributed the corruption of Alcibiades, the young aristocrat who had been a pupil of Socrates, and had sold out his country to the Persian king. He wrote a play called "The Clouds," in which he represented Socrates as a cunning trickster, teaching men how to advocate any cause for money. He portrayed the philosopher sitting in a hanging basket in front of his house, performing absurdities with his pupils. It is exactly the tone of a "Saturday Evening Post" editorial, jeering at "parlor pinks," and college professors who teach their pupils "mugwumpery." The

time came when the mob voted death to Socrates; and this was the great triumph of the funny man of reaction.

But alas, the death of one free-thinker did not suffice to bring the citizens of Athens back to the simple life of their ancestors. They continued to make money and enjoy themselves, and to hire soldiers to do their fighting. Their dramatists developed the so-called "social comedy" —that is, pictures of the fashions and follies of the leisure class, without any propaganda. It is an invariable rule that the absence of propaganda in the art of a people means that this people is in process of intellectual and moral decay. So now a strong man came down out of the north and took charge of Greece, and Greek literature moved into the Alexandrine period.

The center of this new culture was the city of Alexandria, in Egypt. The poets now took pride in their technical skill, and wrote delicate and charming portrayals of the delights of love. A horde of learned scholars busied themselves with criticism and interpretation of the works of the past, and composed long epic poems dealing with grammar and rhetoric and similar subjects. This too was "propaganda"; but you note that it was propaganda of a secondary and imitative sort, it was not produced by men who were doing great deeds, and creating new forms of life. Alexandria was a cosmopolitan center, ruled by a despot, the home of some wealthy and cultured gentlemen, who supported painters and sculptors and poets and musicians and actors to while away their boredom, and to serve as their press-agents and trumpeters. But the art of classical Greece was the work of free men, citizens of a state ruled by a larger proportion of its inhabitants than had ever before held authority in civilized times. That meant throughout the community the joy and thrill of intellectual adventure, it meant a great leap of achievement for the whole group. Such invariably is the origin of art which we now regard as "classical"—and which we use to hold the minds of new generations in chain to tradition and conformity!

## CHAPTER XXI

### ATHENS AND LOS ANGELES

There has been peace in the cave for a while, because Mrs. Ogi has been interested in learning about the Greeks. "I perceive," she says, "that there are superstitions in the arts, just as in religion."

"Exactly," says Ogi; "and they serve the same purpose. They begin as honest ignorance, and are then taken up and used as a source of income and a shield to privilege."

Says Mrs. Ogi, "It strikes me the Greeks lived in a country very much like Southern California."

"Quite so. The climate is the same; and the rocky hills and fertile valleys, and people living the outdoor life, and giving their time to sports. The one-piece bathing-suits that have come into fashion in our 'beauty parades' are about the same thing as the Greek maidens running naked in the games. And if you want to parallel the darker side of Greek sensuousness—"

"There is Hollywood," says Mrs. Ogi.

"There is all smart society, as much luxury and wantonness as your thesis requires."

"But then, why has Los Angeles never had any art? I know what you are going to say—our mental energy goes into real estate advertisements. But joking aside, why?"

"Because the people here have never had a struggle. They came into a country already prepared for them, inhabited by tame Indians living on piñon nuts. All the settlers had to do was to subdivide the land, and raise the price once every year. They are too polite to have an art; if anybody makes a crude effort, it is a masterpiece, and we all get together and boost. You can write one feeble book, and live a life-time on your reputation. Los Angeles is a fruit that was rotten before it was ripe."

"What are we going to do?" asks Mrs. Ogi.

"We are going to take our choice between a social revolution and a slave empire."

Mrs. Ogi is not certain about her choice; she sits, watching the entrance of the cave out of the corner of her eye—the ancestral habit of expecting some hostile in-

truder. After a while she remarks, "I notice you didn't say anything about slavery in Greece."

"It will be better to deal with slavery in the case of the Romans, where its effects show so plainly. The Greeks had slavery, but the force which destroyed their civilization was faction. They had their 'world war,' and Sir Gilbert Murray, who knows them by heart, has drawn a parallel between that war and ours; it is so exact that it makes you laugh—or weep, according to your temperament. The Greek struggle was between the Athenian empire, a democratic sea power, and the Spartans, an aristocratic, military people with no nonsense about them. The war lasted for two generations, off and on; they hadn't developed the technique of extermination as we have. But they had all the social and psychic factors of our 'war for democracy'—'defeatists' and 'bitter-enders,' poets and propagandists of hate, statesmen promising utopias after victory, spies and informers and provocateurs, refugees crowding into the cities, landlords raising rents, food famines, rationing of supplies, and profiteers coining fortunes out of the general misery. And of course the demagogues and haters had their way; Athens was ruined and Sparta was bled white, and the Greeks became subjects, first of Macedonia, then of the Romans, then of the Turks."

"Thus endeth the first lesson," says Mrs. Ogi. "And now for the Romans."

"Well, the Romans didn't bleed themselves to death; they were practical fellows, with a business man's point of view. They turned their deadly short swords against other races; and when they had conquered somebody, they put him to work for the glory of the Grand Old Party. They were 'hard-boiled,' as we say; our big business men of the rougher type—old P. D. Armour, and Pullman, and 'Jesse James' Hill, and Harriman, and the elder Morgan, and Judge Gary. This banker in Chicago that the Republican party has just put over on us as vice-president, General 'Helen Maria' Dawes—he commanded an army against the Germans, and having conquered them, he goes back to put them under bond, to set them at work for long hours, and drain the milk out of the mothers' breasts, and feed it to the international bankers, instead of to the German infants. That was a perfect Roman job.

and General Helen Maria would have been the boy after the Romans' own heart; they would have made him a prefect over the whole of Asia Minor, or Northern Africa, or Spain, and he would have come home a millionaire—but never so rich as the head of one of the Morgan banks in Chicago!"

"I shouldn't think you'd get much art out of people like that," says Mrs. Ogi. "But go ahead and tell us the story."

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE SLAVE EMPIRE

Rome, like all other nations, was founded by stern, determined men, who believed in themselves and in their tribal gods. They conquered the peninsula of Italy, and built mighty cities, and a net-work of military roads, and aqueducts which endure even today. All that time their state was a republic; in fact, they made the word for us—res publicæ mean public affairs, and all Roman citizens took part in them, discussed and voted, passed laws and enforced the laws. They raised armies, and built fleets of ships, and conquered Carthage, and ultimately the whole Mediterranean world. But, according to the custom of the time, they enslaved their prisoners in war; and so, in the course of six or eight centuries, Rome provided the classic demonstration of what slavery does to civilization.

Emerson has said that wherever you find a chain fastened to the wrist of a slave, you find the other end fastened to the wrist of a master. It is possible for a slave-holder to be a virtuous man, but it is impossible for him to raise virtuous children. Slaves are tricky and dishonest, full of suppressions and secret vices; even where they mean well, they debauch the young by waiting upon them and depriving them of initiative. Why should a young aristocrat work, when he knows he will grow up to inherit papa's money? In a few generations he is too effeminate even to fight. Why should he risk his precious life, when he can hire common soldiers?

Not only that, but slavery undermines free labor, and breaks down the farming class. Cheap food poured into

Rome, and the farmers were ruined, and their sons drifted into the cities. The lands of Italy were mortgaged, and the money-lenders got them. Wealthy merchants and officials returning from the provinces became owners of vast estates, while the cities were crowded with a hungry mob, idle, dissolute—and victimized by the owners of slum tenements. You may see every bit of that reproduced in the United States today, for chattel slavery and wage slavery are in their economic effects the same. The only difference is that a process which took six or eight centuries in Rome is taking one century under the stimulus of machinery.

The Roman mob had the vote, and they used it to get something for themselves. There came class struggles, bitter and ferocious. Two young brothers of the aristocracy, Caius and Tiberius Gracchus, became champions of the common people—what we call "parlor Socialists." They were assassinated, and the partisans of privilege, the "old gang," proceeded to slaughter everybody in Italy who threatened their power. There followed two generations of civil strife, and then came a strong man, Julius Cæsar, who put an end to political democracy. In history books that are taught to our school children today you will read that Cæsar was a great and virtuous protector of law and order; because the class which is paying for school text-books in capitalist America is waiting hopefully for the arrival of exactly such a man to put an end to the threat of industrial democracy.

So Rome became in form what it was in fact, an empire, the most colossal machine for plundering that had ever been seen on earth. A little inside gang of rich men ran it, and kept the mob satisfied by bread and circuses and gladiatorial shows. The Roman emperors tried every form of debauchery and blood-thirsty cruelty, incest and unnatural vice, and crowned it by having themselves made into gods with their statues set up to be worshiped in the temples. Their heirs took to murdering and poisoning each other, and Rome was governed by palace revolutions. Then the army discovered that it could share the graft, and the troops took to revolting and setting up their leaders as emperors and gods. All the while the tribute continued to roll in—the wealth of the whole world squandered in one mad orgy—

"Look here," says Mrs. Ogi; "you have got in a solid chapter of preaching—and we are trying to find out about art!"

"I'm all through now," says her husband, humbly. "But no one could understand Roman art without understanding the economics of slavery."

## CHAPTER XXIII

### DUMB PIOUS ÆNEAS

In the beginning the Romans didn't bother very much with art. In their public buildings they were content to take over the Greek styles—but making them heavy and solid, so as to last to the end of time. The attitude of a Roman gentleman toward the fine arts reminds me of a wealthy Southern planter whose son wanted to become a violinist, and the father said, "I can hire all the fiddler-fellows I want." The Roman gentleman bought people of that sort—musicians, dancers and poets with skill handed down from "the glory that was Greece."

Until the republic was dead and the Emperor Augustus took the throne. Then came a time of peace, and a Roman scholar, the son of a country proprietor, looked about him, and seeing the perils of internal decay and outside barbarism looming over his world, he recalled the stern sobriety of the good old days, and yearned to bring back the governing class of Rome to reverence for their ancestors. There is a report that the Emperor Augustus himself suggested the task to the poet; anyhow, Mr. Publius Vergilius Maro, known to us as Virgil, set himself with sober deliberation to the making of a piece of Roman national and religious propaganda.

It was to be an epic after the fashion of Homer, written in dactylic hexameter, like Homer. Virgil cast about him for a hero, and selected a legendary Trojan named Æneas, who was said to have fled from the Greeks and to have founded Rome. The characters in Homer carried an adjective before their names, "the wily Ulysses," "the swift-footed Achilles," and so on. Therefore this hero must have an adjective, and he becomes "the pious Æneas"—the man who respects the old-time

faith, and preserves the old-time traditions of virtue, sobriety and public service.

So here is an epic poem, wrought with verbal skill and sincerity of feeling, conveying to us the dream of Rome as it ought to be, but was not. We see the wanderings of Æneas and his ship-load of companions. We see him land at Carthage, and carry on a love affair with Queen Dido, and then desert her—not a serious impropriety in Roman days. We see the founding father celebrating the old-time religious rites, consulting the auguries and asking the blessing of those gods, of which every Roman had a little image in his home, just as orthodox Russians and Roman Catholics do today.

The "Æneid" is considered ideal for infliction upon helpless school boys; it being full of that careful propriety and decorous tameness which represent what our children ought to be, but are not. The old professor of Latin who inflicted the poem upon me was an ardent propagandist of the Catholic faith, and it was his hope that if we learned proper respect for the established religion of ancient Rome, we might some day be lured into similar respect for the established religion of modern Rome. We read, or made up, a phrase: "Dum pius Æneas," meaning: "While the pious Æneas"—. We boys knew we were being propaganded, and we resented it, and this phrase gave us a chance to express our feelings. "The dumb pious Æneas" became our formula. "What's your next hour?" "Oh, I've got the dumb pious Æneas!"

We would sit and solemnly translate a long account of a prize-fight—a religious prize-fight, part of the pious games. The antagonists wore no vulgar boxing-gloves, but a mysterious, romantic thing called a "cestus," which we did not recognize as plain "brass knucks." And woe to the student if the dumb pious professor happened to catch him with a morning newspaper under his desk, reading an account of a prize-fight which had happened the night before in Madison Square Garden! Woe likewise to the student who, translating the rage of the deserted Queen Dido—"furens quid femina possit"—happened to be caught reading the story of some queen of the stage or the grand opera who had committed suicide because of a faithless lover!

Does anyone question that the "Æneid" is propa-

ganda? If so, I mention that the poet lost his country estate in one of the civil wars; and on account of his beautiful verses the Emperor Augustus restored the property to him, and made him a court favorite. So in the "Æneid" we find this pious emperor described in the following fashion:

> This, this is he—long promised, oft foretold—
> Augustus Cæsar. He the age of gold,
> God-born himself, in Latium shall restore
> And rule the land that Saturn ruled before.

That is a more direct and personal kind of propaganda, the propaganda of a hungry poet in search of his dinner. We shall find a great deal of it through the history of art, and it is, I am told, not entirely unknown in art circles today.

"I have here," says Mrs. Ogi, "a letter from a Professor who has been reading this manuscript. He protests, 'not in a professorial fashion'—"

"Naturally not," says Ogi.

"That you cannot possibly know the old authors as well as he does, who has given the greater part of his life to studying them. 'To say that Virgil was a sycophant of a Roman emperor is a very superficial estimate, which overlooks the really deep matter in his writings. To say that somehow there has constantly been a conscious trick played on humanity, in defending and glorifying the ruling classes, is merely silly. There was no knowledge of a social question then, any more than there was electric machinery.' "

"That is important," answers Ogi, "and I want to get it straight. I should like to put an arrow on the cover of this book, directing the attention of all professors to the fact that I do not state or imply that the great leisure-class artists were playing a 'conscious trick.' Sometimes they knew what they were doing; but most of the time they just wrote that way, because they were that kind of men. I have tried to make this plain; but evidently the Professor missed it, so let me give an illustration:

"Here is a hive of bees; each of these bees all day long diligently labors to collect the juices of flowers and make it into honey; or to collect wax, and build exact hexagonal architectural structures in which to store

the honey. Now comes an entomologist, and studies the life cycle of the bee, and says that the purpose of the hexagonal structures is to hold the honey in the most economical fashion; the purpose of the honey is to nourish the infant bees which will be hatched in the hexagonal cells. Now shall a critic say that this entomologist is 'silly,' because no bee can have understood the principles of economy involved in the hexagonal structure, nor can it have performed chemical tests necessary to determine the nutritive qualities of carbohydrates?

"The class feelings of human beings are instinctive and automatic reactions to economic pressure. The reactions of the artist, who seeks fame and success by voicing these class feelings, may be just as instinctive. But now mankind is emerging into consciousness, and social life is becoming rational and deliberate. I say that one of the steps in this process is to go back and study the life cycle of the artist, and find out where he collected his honey, and how he stored it, and what use was made of it by the hive."

At this point Mrs. Ogi, who has been reading in her Bible—known to the rest of the world as the Works of G. B. S.—produces a text from "The Quintessence of Ibsenism," reading as follows: "The existence of a discoverable and perfectly definite thesis in a poet's work by no means depends on the completeness of his own intellectual consciousness of it."

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE ROMAN FOUR HUNDRED

A few years after Virgil came another Roman poet, whom I learned to read as a lad. He also was taken up by the Emperor Augustus, and wrote fulsome odes in praise of this emperor. Also he found a patron, a wealthy gentleman by the name of Mæcenas, who was really fond of the arts, and gave the poet a Sabine farm to live on. This poet was, I believe, the first author who invited the public into his home, and told them his private affairs, pleasant or otherwise. Being that kind of a tactless author myself, I early conceived a feeling of affection for Mr. Quintus Horatius Flaccus, known to us as Horace.

For one thing, this worldly wise poet knows how to tip us a wink, even while handing out flattery to his patron. For another thing, his Mæcenas seems to have been a really worthy soul. I know how easy it is to love a rich man; but in Rome it must have been hard to find a rich man who could be loved at any price. Horace was a man of humble tastes; all he wanted was to live in his books, and to escape the brawl and fury of politics. We might have expected him to fall down on his knees and kiss the hand of a man who gave him a quiet home, with fruit-trees around him, and snow-capped mountains in the distance, and a crackling log fire in winter-time.

But, as a matter of fact, the poet was quite decent about it. He asserted the right of a man of letters to live an independent life—quite a "modern" idea, and hard for brutal rich Romans to understand. Every now and then Horace would have to visit his patron and friend, and meet some of these haughty conquerors of the world, and be put in his place by them. The father of Horace was what the Romans called a "freedman"; that is, he had formerly been a slave, and the great world sneered at the poet on that account. But instead of being ashamed of his ancestry, and trying to hide it, Horace put his old father into his books, for all Rome to meet. Yes, said the poet, that fond old freedman father brought his little boy to Rome to get an education, and walked every day to school with him, carrying his books and slate.

We can honor this honest gentleman, and read his charming verses with pleasure—but without committing the absurdities of the classical tradition, which ranks Horace as a great poet. He was a pioneer man of letters, and in that way made history; but there is nothing he wrote that the world has not learned to write better today. There are a score of young fellows writing verses for the columns of American newspapers who can turn out just as witty and clever and human stuff. "F. P. A." has written "take-offs" on Horace, which shock the purists, but would have delighted Horace. Louis Untermeyer has published volumes of such mingled wisdom and wit; and there is Austin Dobson, and above all, Heine—a man who writes verse of loveliness to tear your heart-strings, and at the same time had the nerve to hit out at the ruling-class brutes of his age.

"Wasn't there a single artist in Rome who revolted?" asks Mrs. Ogi.

"Yes, there was one. He also was the son of a freedman, and came nearly a century after Virgil and Horace, in the reign of the infamous Domitian. His name was Juvenal, and he wrote satires in which he flayed the aristocracy of the empire for their vileness and materialism. I once published a novel, 'The Metropolis,' in which I did the same thing for the so-called 'Four Hundred' of New York; and it is interesting to compare the two pictures—"

"Now don't you start talking about your own books!" cries Mrs. Ogi.

"I don't offer 'The Metropolis' as literature, but merely as a record of things I saw in New York twenty years ago. Afterwards I'll show what Juvenal has to say on the same topics. First, 'The Metropolis,' page 278, listing the health-cures of ladies in high society:

"One of the consequences of the furious pace was that people's health broke down very quickly; and there were all sorts of bizarre ways of restoring it. One person would be eating nothing but spinach, and another would be living on grass. One would chew a mouthful of soup thirty-two times; another would eat every two hours, and another only once a week. Some went out in the early morning and walked barefooted in the grass, and others went hopping about the floor on their hands and knees to take off fat. There were 'rest cures' and 'water cures,' 'new thought' and 'metaphysical healing' and 'Christian Science'; there was an automatic horse, which one might ride indoors, with a register showing the distance traveled. Montague met one man who had an electric machine, which cost thirty thousand dollars, and which took hold of his arms and feet and exercised him while he waited. He met a woman who told him she was riding an electric camel!

"But of course they could not really succeed in reducing weight, because they were incapable of self-restraint. Mrs. Billy Alden gave Montague a delightfully malicious account of a certain lordly fat lady of her set, who had got the Turkish-bath habit. Terrible to encounter, most awful in visage, she would enter the baths by night, and all the attendants would rush into instant action. 'She delights in perspiring with great tumult,' said Mrs. Billy.

'And when her arms have sunk down, wearied with the heavy dumb-bells, the sly masseur omits to rub down no part of her person. Meantime, perhaps there are a number of guests assembled for dinner at home. They wait, overcome with drowsiness and hunger. At last the lady comes, flushed, and declaring that she is thirsty enough for a whole 'magnum.' As soon as she is seated at the table, the footman brings her a bucket of ice, packed about her own special quart of champagne. She drinks half of this before she tastes any food—calling it an appetizer. She drinks so much that it won't stay down, but returns as a cascade on the floor'—and Montague had to stop Mrs. Billy in her too vivid description of the sights which a certain unhappy banker, the husband of this lady, had to witness at his dinner-parties. Said Mrs. Billy, with her usual vividness of metaphor: 'It is like a snake that has crawled into a cask of wine; it takes in and gives out again.' "

Mrs. Ogi interrupts. "There is one thing I want to make plain—that you weren't married to me when you published that disgusting stuff."

"All right," says Ogi; "it shall be entered in the record. But you must understand that I am not to blame for Mrs. Billy's stories."

"You were to blame for the company you kept," declares Mrs. Ogi. "I call that sort of writing inexcusable."

"Well, I'll try again," says her husband. "On page 351 of 'The Metropolis' you find a glimpse of the underworld of New York:

"So far had the specialization in evil proceeded that there were places of prostitution which did a telephone business exclusively, and would send a woman in a cab to any address; and there were high-class assignation-houses, which furnished exquisite apartments and the services of maids and valets. And in this world of vice the modern doctrine of the equality of the sexes was fully recognized; there were gambling-houses and pool-rooms and opium-joints for women, and drinking-places which catered especially to them. In the 'orange room' of one of the big hotels, you might see rich women of every rank and type, fingering the dainty leather-bound and gold-embossed wine cards. In this room alone were sold over ten thousand drinks every day; and the hotel paid a rental

of a million a year to the Devon estate. Not far away the Devons also owned negro-dives, where, in the early hours of the morning, you might see richly gowned white women drinking.

"Montague was told by a certain captain of police a terrible story about the wife of our very greatest railroad magnate, who lived in a colossal marble palace on Fifth Avenue. As soon as she perceived that her husband was asleep, she would put on a yellow wig as a disguise, and wearing an overcoat which she kept for this purpose, she would quit the palace on foot, with only a single attendant. She would enter one of the brothels in the 'Tenderloin,' where she had a room set apart for herself. There she took her stand, with naked breasts and gilded nipples, bearing the name of Zaza, and displaying the person of the mother of one of our most magnificent young lords of society and finance. She would receive all comers with caresses, and when the madame dismissed her customers, she would take her leave sadly, lingering, and being the last to close the door of her room. Still unsatisfied in her desires, she would retire with her sullied cheeks, bearing back the odors of the brothel to the pillow of her mighty railroad magnate. And shall I speak of the love-charms—"

"Most emphatically you shall not!" cries Mrs. Ogi, "I think we've had enough of 'The Metropolis,' and I won't hear of its being reproduced in this new book. It's your crudest Socialist propaganda—"

"You're quite sure it's propaganda?" says Ogi.

"Of course. Who would question that?"

"Well then, I've proved one point!" says the other.

"I don't understand."

"I have made you the victim of a mean little trick. Each of those passages starts out as 'The Metropolis'; but then it slides into Juvenal—the sixth satire, dealing with the ladies of ancient Rome. The point of my joke is that you will have to consult the books in order to be sure which is Juvenal and which is me. Of course I've had to change names and phrases, replacing Roman things with New York things. And I've had to tone Juvenal down, because there are some of his phrases I couldn't reproduce—"

"There are some you have tried to reproduce, and that

you're going to cut out," says Mrs. Ogi. And as always, she has her way, and so it is a Bowdlerized Juvenal you have been reading!

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

"You had your fun out of that," says Mrs. Ogi. "But of course I can't judge; somebody who knows about Rome may come along and show that it's all nonsense."

"Those who know about Rome," says Ogi, "don't always know about capitalist America. There has never been such a parallel of two civilizations in all history. I could write, quite literally, a whole book of mystifications —quoting American poets and statesmen and journalists, and mixing in passages from the same kind of people in Rome, and unless you knew the different passages you couldn't tell which was which."

"We still have our republic, have we not?"

"In every presidential election for the past fifty years that candidate has won who has had the campaign-funds; and he has had the campaign-funds because he was the candidate of the plutocracy. Right now we are at the critical moment—the age of the Gracchi. We are trying to rouse the people to action; and whether we succeed, or whether we are going to be slaughtered, as our industrial masters desire and intend—"

Mrs. Ogi's hand tightens upon her husband's arm. She never has this thought out of mind; and whenever in the midnight hours a cat or dog sets foot upon the porch of her home, she leaps up, expecting to see a company of bankers and merchants, clad in their new uniform of white night-shirts and hoods. Our aristocratic party has what it calls the "Better Roman Federation," and collects lists of the proscribed, and issues secret bulletins to its mobbing parties. Last week, down at Brundisium, our naval harbor, their subsidized mob raided a meeting of wage slaves, beat some of them insensible with clubs, threw a little girl into a great receptacle of boiling coffee, scalding her almost to death, and dragged six men off into the woods and tarred and feathered them.

"What do you really think is coming?" asks Mrs. Ogi.

"There are two factors in modern civilization that did not exist in Rome. First there is the printing press, a means of spreading information. So far as the master class can control it, it is a machine for debauching the race mind; but in spite of everything the masters can do, the workers get presses of their own, and so get information which was denied the slaves of Rome."

"And the other factor?"

"The labor movement. In Rome there were some labor unions, but they were weak and the slaves were an unorganized mob; when they revolted, as they did again and again, they were slaughtered wholesale. But the modern labor movement goes on growing; it trains its members, and gives them sound ideas. So, out of the final struggle we may have, not another empire, and another collapse of civilization, but the co-operative commonwealth of our dreams."

This, of course, is outright preaching; but it happens that Mrs. Ogi has just received a letter about the child who was thrown into the scalding coffee, so her husband gets his way for once. Besides, as he explains, there is nothing more to be said about Roman art, because there is no more Roman art. The plutocracy of the empire had brought themselves to a state where they were incapable of sustained thinking or effort of any sort. The barbarian hordes, which had been besieging the frontiers, broke through and overwhelmed the Roman empire, and so came what history knows as the Dark Ages.

When I was a lad, my Catholic teachers explained to me that these ages were called dark, not because they had no culture, but because we were so unfortunate as not to know about it. I was not able to answer the Catholic gentlemen in those days, but I can answer them now. When groups of human beings kindle the precious light of the intellect, they make it into a torch and pass it on to posterity. That is always their first impulse; and so we may be sure that if an age had no art, it was a dark age.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE CHRISTIAN REVOLUTION

It took several centuries for the peoples of Europe to lift themselves out of barbarism and chaos. Then we find a new art developing, an altogether different art, built upon Babylonian and Hebrew foundations, instead of Greek and Roman. It meant an overthrowing of standards, and a setting-up of new values—a precedent of enormous importance to social revolutionists.

What exactly was the difference between Pagan and Christian art? The Greeks said: The human body is the most beautiful thing in the world. To which the Christians replied: All flesh is grass. The Greeks said: Because the body is beautiful, we immortalize it in statues. The Christians replied: We are iconoclasts—that is to say, breakers of marble idols. The Romans said: Material wealth is the basis of individual and national safety. The Christians replied: What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

These Christian sayings meant that mankind had discovered new satisfactions, replacing, for a time at any rate, the customary ones of physical pleasure and domination over others. These new joys came from inside the self, and required a new word, spiritual. To the artist was set the task of making these inner qualities apprehensible, and for this he had to have a new technique. Where the Greeks had carved the body graceful, the Christians carved it with that ugliness which results from the ascetic life. Where the Romans had represented their great men muscular and mighty, the Christians represented them frail and sickly. The Christians reveled in wounds, disease and deformity, taking a perverse pleasure in defying old standards—a process known to the psychologist as "over-correction." The two favorite themes of Christian art became a man-god who accepted all suffering and humiliation, and a woman-god who allowed the erring soul an unlimited number of new opportunities.

Because this new art was trying so often to express the inexpressible, it was driven to symbolism. The painters and sculptors invented outward and visible signs of the inward and spiritual graces: the cross, the crown of

thorns, the sacrificial lamb. The Virgin Mary would have a heart of radiant fire, with perhaps a white dove perched on top of it. The saints and martyrs wore halos of light about their heads, so as not to be mistaken for ordinary beggars, or for patients in the last stages of tuberculosis. One should hardly need to state that all this art was propaganda; it was permitted on that basis alone.

The significance of all this to social revolutionists lies in the fact that they also plan an art revolution. What the Christians did to Pagan art, the Socialists now seek to do to bourgeois art; metaphorically speaking, to smash the idols and burn the temples dedicated to the worship of individual and class aggrandizement, and to set up new art standards, based on the abolition of classes, and the assertion of brotherhood and solidarity. Just as the stone which was rejected of the Pagan builders became the cornerstone of the Christian temple, so those things which are despised and rejected of plutocratic snobbery will become the glory of revolutionary art; the very phrases of contempt will become battle-cries—the great unwashed, the vulgar herd, the common man. The revolutionary artist, clasping the toiling masses to his bosom—

"Over-correction?" suggests Mrs. Ogi.

"Partly that; but also the longing for solidarity, the enlargement of the personality through mass feeling."

"But beauty came back into art," says Mrs. Ogi.

"Yes, and that is an interesting story; a drama of the conflict between God and Mammon, and the triumph of what I am calling Mammonart. I have pondered a title for the drama—something like this: Christianity as a Social Success; or the admission of the Martyr to the Four Hundred!"

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE INS AND THE OUTS

There are two types of human temperament and attitude which manifest themselves in the world's art product: the Art of Beauty and the Art of Power.

The Art of Beauty is produced by ruling classes when they are established and safe, and wish to be entertained, and to have their homes and surroundings set apart from

the common mass. I do not mean that simple and primitive people do not produce beauty of a naïve sort; but for such art to develop and mature, it must be taken up by the privileged classes, patronizing and encouraging the artist, and making his work a form of class distinction. The fact that the men who produce this art have come from the people is a fact of no significance; for the ruling classes take what they want where they find it, and shape it to their own class ends. The characteristics of the Art of Beauty, whether in painting, or sculpture, or music, or words, or actions, are those of rest and serenity, pleasure in things as they actually exist; also clarity of form—because the leisure-class artist has time to study technique, and knows what he wants to do.

In every human society there is one group which controls, and another which struggles for control; the "ins" versus the "outs," the "haves" versus the "have-nots." In every well-developed civilization this latter class will be strong enough to have its art, which is apt to be crude and instinctive, full of surging, half-expressed and half-realized emotion. Such art lays stress upon substance, rather than form; it aims, or at any rate tends, to arouse to action; and so we call it the Art of Power.

This is the art which is generally described as "propaganda" by established criticism; the distinction being, as we have previously explained, itself a piece of propaganda. The Art of Beauty is equally propaganda; it is the gas-barrage of the "haves," and the essence of its deadliness lies in the fact that it looks so little like a weapon. But to me it seems clear enough that when a leisure-class artist portrays the graces and refinements of the civilization which maintains him, when he paints the noble features, and quotes the imaginary golden words of ruling-class ladies and gentlemen, he is doing the best he knows how to protect those who give him a living. Nor is he, as a rule, without some awareness of the harsh and rough and dangerous forces which surround him, besieging the ivory tower, or the temple, or the sacred grove, or wherever it is that he keeps his working tools. But even where the artist is instinctive and naïve, the class which employs him knows what he is doing; it knows what is "safe and sane," and "of sound tendency"; it approves of such art, and pays its money to maintain such art.

Unless the society is stagnant, like China, its social life is marked by changes of power. The revolutionary classes succeed, and replace the old rulers; whereupon we note at once a change in their art. Those who were dissatisfied now find peace; those whose emotions overwhelmed them now find themselves able to order their thoughts; those who were interested in what they had to say now achieve triumphs of technique; in short, those who were producing an Art of Power now begin to produce an Art of Beauty. And so we are in position to understand what happened to Christian art, when the martyrs and the saints broke into "good society."

The Roman Empire fell about five hundred years after Christ, and for another five hundred years the Italian peninsula was a battle-ground of invading barbarian hordes. When finally things settled down, the land was held by a great number of feudal princes and plundering groups, having their lairs in castles and walled cities. Christianity was the official religion, and abbots and bishops and popes were robber chiefs commanding armies. In between their military campaigns they took their pleasures like other princes; and among their pleasures were those of art.

The inner emotions which Christianity cultivated were free to those who sought them in monks' cells and hermits' caves, but they could not be purchased nor rented out, and they wilted in the atmosphere of palaces and courts. So gradually we find Italian religious art undergoing a change. The saints become gentlemen of refinement wearing scholars' robes; Jesus becomes a heavenly prince, in spotless linen garments and a golden crown, casting benevolent looks upon the clergy; the Virgin Mary becomes the favorite mistress of a duke or abbot or pope—or perhaps the painter's own mistress. This latter arrangement is common, for business reasons easy to understand. The lady is at hand, and has nothing to do while the painter is painting; he gets the service of a model free, he flatters his lady love's vanity, and at the same time he keeps her safe from other painters. So the poison of luxury creeps into what is supposed to be religious art; and we see the symbols of martyrdom and holy sacrifice employed to glorify the vanities and cloak the vices of the predatory classes.

But the soul of man never dies; it goes on struggling for justice and brotherhood, in spite of all betrayal and persecution. So inside the church and outside comes a long line of heroic souls, fighting to restore the primitive simplicity and honesty of the faith. The struggle between the "ins" and the "outs," the "haves" and the "have-nots," takes the form of heresy and schism, of mendicant and preaching orders and Protestant sects. Young and obscure servants of God arise, denouncing the corruption of the church machine. Some retire to monasteries, spurning the wicked world; others take literally the words of Jesus, and go out upon the road without scrip or cloak, preaching to whoever will hear them, and living on charity. They are denounced and excommunicated, their followers are slaughtered by the tens and hundreds of thousands; but the movement persists, and when the leaders die they are canonized, and become in their turn themes for artists—to be "idealized," and dressed in spotless raiment, and made fit for stained glass windows and the art galleries of prelates and princes. St. Francis of Assisi in the thirteenth century, putting on beggar's clothing and being publicly disinherited by his father; Savonarola in the fifteenth century, persuading the rich to throw their jewels into the flames, and being publicly hanged in Florence; Martin Luther in the sixteenth century, preaching against the sale of indulgences and nailing his theses to the church door; George Fox in the eighteenth century, crying out against priestly corruption in the streets, and jailed time after time; Bishop Brown in the twentieth century, kicked out of the Episcopal church for repudiating dogma and defending Communism—such are the figures which have kept the Christian religion alive, and such are the themes of vital religious art.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE HEAVEN OF ELEGANCE

It was in Italy first that the language of the people became the language of culture, replacing Latin; and the two greatest writers of this age afford us an interesting contrast between the Art of Beauty and the Art of Power.

The favorite ruling-class poet and novelist of

medieval Italy was the illegitimate son of a merchant, who was recognized by his father and given the best education of his time. He chose as his mistress the natural daughter of a king; with this married lady he carried on an intrigue for many years, and wrote to her long epic poems about Greek heroes, weaving into the poems elaborate acrostics and secret codes. The first letters of the lines, taken according to certain numerical systems, made three other separate poems; other letters, chosen according to other systems, spelled the names of other lady loves. In such ways the skillful artists of the Italian courts were accustomed to beguile their leisure, wrung from the toil of a wretched enslaved peasantry.

This poet rose to fame, and became the darling of the ruling classes. He was sent as an ambassador on various important missions to popes and princes; he became the favorite of a queen, and did not reject her favor even when she turned into a murderess. He learned to write beautiful Italian prose, a great service to his country. He used his skill to compose a collection of short stories dealing with the sojourn in a country villa of a number of Italian ladies and gentlemen of wealth and charm, the occasion being an outbreak of the plague in Florence. These ladies and gentlemen did not feel impelled by their religion to nurse the suffering; they were of too great importance to be risked in such crude fashion, so they retired, and passed their time listening to charmingly narrated tales of sexual promiscuity.

I do not mean to imply that there is nothing but smut in the "Decameron" of Boccaccio. We shall find it a rule throughout history that leisure-class ladies and gentlemen do not spend their entire time in trying new sexual combinations. They have to eat, and so their artists give us delightful, appetizing accounts of banquets. They have to drink, and so their artists give us an entire lore of intoxicating liquors. They have to cover their nakedness, so we have a complicated art of dress, a mass of subtlety constantly changing, and affording traps to catch the feet of the unwary, so that the sacred inner circles may be protected from those individuals who have disgraced themselves by doing useful work, or by having parents or grandparents who did useful work.

Also, the ladies and gentlemen have palaces to live in,

and country estates to which they may flee from pestilence, famine and war; so we have the art of architecture. Because these homes have walls which must be decorated, we have the art of painting; and so on through a long list of cultural accomplishments. Moreover, not all ladies and gentlemen have been able to exclude the natural human emotions from their hearts; so in leisure-class art we have sentiments and sentimentalities. We like to be sorry for the poor, provided they are "worthy"; so we have "idylls" and other sad, sweet tales. When we are sick with ennui, we like to imagine going back to the country; so we have a long line of "return to nature" arts—eclogues and bucolics and pastorals, with beautiful shepherds and shepherdesses dancing on the green, and country lads and lasses giving touchingly quaint imitations of the manners of their betters.

Also we have in this leisure-class world vestigial traces of the sense of duty. We take this sense and refine it or exaggerate it, making it into something fantastic, stimulating to jaded tastes. So we find in Boccaccio the famous story of the "patient Griselda," a leisure-class model of wifely fidelity and humility. She is married to a monster, who subjects her to every indignity the perverted imagination can conceive; but she endures all things, and continues to be his patient and devoted slave, and in the end she conquers her tormentor, and brings about the necessary happy ending. The legend of this most convenient lady represents a popular form of masculine wish-fulfillment.

Giovanni Boccaccio died in ripe old age, and the Catholic Church took cognizance of his popularity among the Italian people by preparing an expurgated and authorized edition of his "Decameron." From this edition they omitted no word of the obscenities, but they changed each of the stories so that wherever Boccaccio described indecencies committed by priests and monks and holy popes, the said indecencies were transferred to laymen! The tales of this darling of the Italian leisure class remain today one of the most popular of books, which every dirty old boy keeps hidden in his trunk, and every dirty young boy reads under his desk while the professor of moral philosophy is lecturing on the social responsibilities of great wealth.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE MUCKRAKER'S HELL

Now by way of contrast we take the Italian poet of revolt and moral indignation. We have only to look at the pictures of this man to see that he is a crusader; a lean, hawk-like face, stern, bitter, lined with suffering; "the mournfulest face," says Carlyle, "that ever was painted from reality; an altogether tragic, heart-affecting face." There has never been a world poet so deliberately ethical, preoccupied with moral problems, and using his art as a means of teaching mankind what he believed to be sound ideas about conduct.

Dante Alighieri was born to comfortable circumstances in Florence; he had the education of a scholar, and might have lived a life of literary ease. Instead, he chose to take part in the tumultuous and dangerous politics of his city, becoming one of the leaders of the republican party. When the forces of the pope conquered Italy, he fled for his life, and a sentence of exile was pronounced upon him. This exile was a cruel hardship; he describes himself as "a pilgrim, almost a beggar, displaying against my will the wounds of fortune. . . . Truly have I been a vessel without sail and without rudder, borne to divers ports and shores and havens by the dry wind that blows from dolorous poverty." Yet he never wavered in his convictions; on the contrary, by his writings he brought upon himself a confirmation of the decree of exile, and an exile he died.

We shall not go into the details of medieval politics, the complicated wranglings among various cities and principalities, the warring factions in each, plus the partisans of papal dominion and those of the Holy Roman Empire. Suffice it here to point out that one of the greatest world poets was from the beginning to the end of his life a politician, and took a vigorous part in the practical affairs of his time, fighting his enemies hard, hating them implacably, and not hesitating to use his literary art to punish them in a future world. When Dante goes down into hell he encounters in the lowest pits of torment various Florentine politicians, who have betrayed and debauched his city. How he regards them may be judged by the

case of Bocca degli Abbati, a gentleman who is found locked helpless up to his neck in ice; the poet grabs his hair and tears it out by the handful!

The quality which Dante especially loathed was greed, "cupiditia." He raged at the church of his time, because it had accepted the "fatal gift" from the Emperor Constantine—the temporal possessions which made the popes into worldly potentates, intriguers and heads of armies. The two popes of his own time Dante flung into hell, and portrayed heaven itself as reddening with anger at their deeds. St. Peter declares that each of them "has of my cemetery made a sewer of blood and filth." This is plain muck-raking; and how undignified and unliterary it must have seemed to the cultured prelates of the fourteenth century!

It seems that way to modern critics also. Albert Mordell has published a book entitled "Dante and Other Waning Classics," in which he argues that the "Divine Comedy" is ugly, as well as out of date, with its elaborate symbolism derived from church legend, and from Greek and Latin mythology, combined and complicated by scholastic subtlety. Mr. Mordell is one of those who think that art ought not to preach; and certainly Dante does not shirk this issue—he tells us in plain words: "The kind of philosophy under which we proceed in the whole and in the part is moral philosophy or ethics; because the whole was undertaken not for speculation but for use."

What are the moral problems which occupied the soul of Dante, and have these problems any interest for us? There are two which I believe will always concern mankind. First, the problem of divine justice. How does it happen that the wicked flourish? How shall we explain their power to oppress the innocent? If God has power to prevent it, why does He not use that power? Dante traveled to the depths of hell and ascended through purgatory to heaven, seeking answers to these questions. Our only advantage over him is that we do not even think we can answer.

The second great problem is that of love. The Christian revolution had brought with it a new attitude toward womanhood. Mankind made the discovery of what the psycho-analysts call the sublimation of sex, that gratification withheld acts as a stimulus to all the psychic being. So

the simple naturalism of the Greeks was replaced by the romanticism of the Middle Ages; and Dante's whole being, his total art product, was illuminated by the vision of a great and wonderful love, which began by a chance meeting with a nine-year-old girl, and continued without physical expression through the poet's whole life. No student of the science of sex today would accept Dante's attitude as sound or sensible; nevertheless, we are stirred by his exaltation of the ideal woman, and the Beatific Vision which she brings to his soul.

In Dante's pilgrimage through hell he accepted the leadership of Virgil. This was because he honored in the Roman poet those factors we have stressed—the moral earnestness, the effort of a lofty soul to rescue a civilization. In Dante's time the cultured world was just making the discovery of Greek and Roman art, and was all a-thrill with the wonder of a past age, rescued after a thousand years: the Renaissance, or re-birth, we call it.

We may understand how it was by recalling our own excitement over the tomb of King Tutankhamen. Let us suppose that in that tomb had been found Egyptian literary masterpieces, which revealed the existence of a Socialist civilization in ancient Egypt. There was a mighty king who had been just to the poor, who had abolished exploitation by the landlords, and had kept the peace with other nations. A Socialist poet of our day, wishing to satirize the "war for democracy" by locating its leaders in hell, would take this ancient Egyptian king for a guide, and would exchange fraternal greetings with his royal comrade, and discuss with him political conditions both in ancient Egypt and in modern America.

And in the nethermost pits the poet would meet Lloyd George and Clemenceau and Woodrow Wilson, together with the rowdies and bullies whom these statesmen turned loose upon mankind. Attorney-General Palmer, for example, would be represented as a devil with a long barbed tail; the poet would seize this tail and twist it, and the attorney-general would howl and shriek, and a radical audience would be delighted. But respectable critics would turn up their noses, saying that of course no one would take such a thing for art; it was the most obvious soapbox propaganda.

So the cultured Renaissance critics looked upon

Dante as a crude and "popular" person; the highly cultured Bishop della Casa spoke patronizingly concerning "the rustic homeliness of his language and style, his lack of decorum and grace." If space permitted I could show you that every truly vital artist who has ever lived has been thus dealt with by the academic critics of his own time.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE PIOUS POISONERS

The Italian princes were no more influenced by the moral austerity of Dante than the Roman ruling class had been by Virgil. Medieval Italy traveled the same road as imperial Rome, and two centuries after Dante we find the vicars of God on earth reproducing the worst crimes of the Neros and Caligulas. Alexander VI, the Borgia pope, purchased his high office, and then set to work to plunder the cities of Italy and harry the whole peninsula with war. Among his children by his numerous mistresses was Cesare Borgia, who became the commander of the papal armies, and slaughtered and poisoned all who stood in his way, including his own brother. Returning from his wars, he would amuse himself by using his prisoners of war as targets for archery practice in the courtyard of the Vatican. In the end Cesare died of wounds, Alexander died by poison, and his daughter Lucrezia poisoned her own son and then herself.

Here was an ideal environment for the development of leisure-class art. These popes and princes built themselves magnificent palaces, and as a measure of soul-insurance they built cathedrals and churches. They were willing to spend fortunes upon famous artists; and the artists, needless to say, were willing to take the money. Browning has a poem, "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church," a vivid picture of the attitude of mind of these pious poisoners and artistic assassins. The bishop lies upon his couch dying, and his sons, politely known as "nephews," gather about him to hear his vision of a tomb which is to preserve his memory and bring peace to his soul. He describes the treasures of beauty which are to go upon the tomb—

One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not St. Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?

The pious soul goes on to specify his epitaph; it must be "choice Latin, picked phrase," from Cicero. Having got this—

And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!

The true "art for art's sake" attitude, you perceive; and under the patronage of such esthetic prelates, the poets and musicians, the painters and sculptors flourished in sixteenth century Italy. Among those who were employed by the poisoner pope, Alexander VI, was a youthful painter of extraordinary ability, Raphael Sanzio by name. This pope was succeeded by two others, who conquered many cities for the glory of God, and spent millions of their plunder upon religious art. So this young painter of genius was floated through life upon a flood of gold ducats, and with his magic brushes he turned the blood and sweat and tears of the peasantry of Italy into beautiful images of serenely smiling madonnas, and enraptured saints, and ineffably gracious Jesuses. Raphael is ranked by many as the greatest painter in history; we stand, therefore, within the very holy of holies, before the shrine of "pure" beauty, and it will repay us to dig into the roots of his life, and see from what soil this precious flower grows.

He was the son of a court painter, and his life was one of ease, swift achievement, and applause. He was gifted with all the graces of body, also a genial and winning nature. He studied the work of one painter after another, and acquired all the powers of each. He became so famous that his life was "not that of a painter, but of a prince." Ambassadors from the wealthy and powerful besieged his doors, and waited for months in hope of an interview. He went about accompanied by a band of more than fifty youths, pupils and adorers of his art.

He had one weakness, which was for the ladies. The

popes and princes who cherished him sought to put loving restraint upon him, and planned wealthy marriages for him, but he could not bring himself to stoop to matrimony. At this time he was decorating the palace of a Sienese millionaire, Chigi, owner of ships and of salt and alum mines throughout Italy; this gentleman, discovering that Raphael was so wrapped up in his mistress that he was neglecting the palace decorations, solved the problem by a brilliant move—bringing the mistress to live in the palace! In the end this darling of fortune died at the age of thirty-seven, of a fever brought on by self-indulgence. His adoring biographer, Vasari, tells us that when he knew his last hour had come, he sent away his mistress from his home, "as a good Christian should," and so passed on to decorate the palaces of heaven.

What was the secret of Raphael's fortune? The answer is, he painted the ruling class of Italy, in their physical beauty and their material luxury and splendor. In order to flatter their vanity, he painted them as all the saints and demigods of the Catholic mythology. Every trace of asceticism is now gone out of church art; the Christian gentlemen and mistresses and virgins and gods and saints of Raphael and his contemporaries are full-throated and full-bosomed and ruddy-cheeked pictures of prosperity; their ecstasies have never been permitted to interfere with their digestions. The angel comes to the Virgin Mary to bring to her the sacred tidings of her divine pregnancy, and finds her seated, not in a carpenter's hut, but in a palace. Even when Jesus is crucified and borne to the sepulchre, the mourning ladies have not forgotten the proper arrangement of their hair and the proper costumes for the historic occasion. Says Vasari: "Our Lady is seen to be insensible, and the heads of all the weeping figures are exceedingly graceful."

Needless to say, Raphael painted portraits of all the Old Men and the Witch Doctors of his time, and he made them magnificent and thrilling. Of the portrait of Pope Julius II, valiant war-maker, Vasari writes: "The picture impresses on all beholders a sense of awe, as if it were indeed the living object." Later on came another pope, Leo X, who in order to get the millions necessary for his family monuments, and for the art glories of St. Peter's, started a sale of indulgences, which brought about the

church revolt known to us as the Reformation. His portrait by Raphael shows a Tammany politician of the barroom type; and Vasari tells us—

> The velvet softness of the skin is rendered with the utmost fidelity; the vestments in which the Pope is clothed are also most faithfully depicted, the damask shines with a glossy luster; the furs which form the linings of his robes are soft and natural, while the gold and silk are copied in such a manner that they do not seem to be painted, but really appear to be silk and gold. There is also a book in parchment decorated with miniatures, a most vivid imitation of the object represented, with a silver bell, finely chased, of which it would not be possible adequately to describe the beauty. Among other accessories, there is, moreover, a ball of burnished gold on the seat of the Pope, and in this—such is its clearness—the divisions of the opposite window, the shoulders of the Pope, and the walls of the room, are faithfully reflected; all these things are executed with so much care, that I fully believe no master ever has done, or ever can do anything better.

A man who can perform such miracles for the rich and powerful can command his own price, and is master of everything except his own passions. Raphael's old uncle wrote, begging him to return to his home town and take himself a respectable wife. The young painter's reply has come down to us. "If I had done as you wished," he says, "I should not be where I am now." And he goes on to tell where he is—

> At the present time I have property in Rome worth three thousand gold ducats, and an income of fifty gold crowns, as his Holiness gives me a salary of three hundred gold ducats for superintending the fabric of St. Peter, which will continue as long as I live; and I am sure to earn more from other sources and am paid whatever I choose to ask for my work. And I have begun to paint another room for his Holiness which will bring me one thousand two hundred gold ducats, so that you see, my dearest uncle, that I do honor to you and to all my family and to my country. . . . What city in the world can compare with Rome, what enterprise is more worthy than this of Peter, which is the first temple in the world? And these are the grandest works which have ever been seen, and will cost more than a million in gold, and the Pope has decided to spend sixty thousand ducats a year on the fabric and can think of nothing else.

While Raphael was thus flourishing and proud of his world, a German monk by the name of Martin Luther was nailing his condemnation of the papacy upon the door of the church at Wittenberg. But our painter-prince was so busy, he had so many commissions to portray new

popes and cardinals, new annunciations and transfigurations and illuminations and immaculate conceptions, that he probably never even heard of the barbarian rebel in the far North. He remained to the end the perfect exemplar of leisure-class art, and is today the darling of pious peasant-wives, and sentimental school-marms doing culture-pilgrimages: in short, of all who wish to develop their emotions at the expense of their brains, and to shut their eyes to the grim realities of life, out of which alone true and vital beauty can grow.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE PAPAL PAYMASTERS

Among its numerous artists of beauty Renaissance Italy produced one man who did not find life a garden of pleasure; one man who, when he sinned, did not do it with easy grace and cheerful heart; a man who faced the mysteries of life, and took seriously the terrors which the medieval mind has conjured for itself. This man was a rebel against the wanton and cruel spirit of his age; a rebel also against nature, those cruelties which time and death inflict upon our race. He was a lonely man, pursued by the jealousies and greeds of his rivals, tortured by his own sensuality and by fears of eternal torment. He lived a life of futile and agonized revolt, and produced some magnificent and terrible art.

In this book it is our task to study the artist in relation to the masters of money; and we shall find no more tragic illustrations of the waste that is wrought in the life of genius by the powers of greed, than are revealed to us in the story of Michelangelo Buonarroti. He is ranked as one of the greatest sculptors of all time; he was also one of the greatest of painters, and a great poet. Like most of those who have visioned the sublime and the colossal, he was a man of frail physique, fear-haunted all his life. As a child he was beaten by his father, who sought to break him of the desire to become an artist. At the age of nine he was taken to hear the thunderings of Savonarola, another frail prophet who had arisen to denounce the vices of the church in Florence. When Michelangelo was twenty-three, Savonarola was publicly hanged, after

having been excommunicated by the Borgia pope. The young painter at that time was beguiling himself with Greek beauty; but the terrible fate of the prophet cannot have failed to impress him, and helps to account for the religious fervors of his later years. Two worlds struggled in his soul, the world of pagan beauty and luxurious pleasure, and the world of heavenly raptures and fanatical asceticism.

This artist's abilities were quickly recognized. The same pope, Julius II, who was showering Raphael with golden ducats, adopted Michelangelo as his chief glorifier, and the two of them spent a year or two preparing colossal plans for the pope's tomb, something greater than any tomb ever seen on earth before, a perfect mountain of marble, with more than forty statues of colossal size. Here we see Michelangelo's fate; one of the great masters of life, with a mighty message concerning the destiny of man, he is obliged to get the money by which he lives, and the marble which he carves, from a vain and greedy politician in churchly raiment. He is permitted to make statues of David and of Moses, of Day and Night and Morning and Evening, and other great symbolic ideas; but he must carve them for the tomb of some pope or potentate, and must spend the greater part of his life in quarreling—not merely with this pope or potentate, but with officials and subordinates, all hating, intriguing, threatening to stab or to poison.

In the sentimental rubbish which historians and art critics write about the Middle Ages, we are told that mighty cathedrals and temples were produced by the cooperative devotion and reverence of whole communities of worshipers. When you come to investigate the facts, you find that they were produced amid a chaos of wrangling and cheating and lying, exactly as a modern public building, or a battleship, or a fleet of aeroplanes is produced. The chief architect of Pope Julius II was a dissipated and murderous rascal, who was putting rotten walls into the Vatican buildings—walls which have had to be repaired incessantly ever since. He carried on intrigues against Michelangelo, and succeeded in persuading the pope that it was bad luck for anyone to build his own tomb while he was alive. So the pope dropped the project, and Michelangelo was left in debt, having to pay out of his

own pocket the costs of transporting the mountain of marble. The sculptor stormed the Vatican and insisted upon being paid, and the pope had him put out by a groom.

Next he was required to make a bronze statue of his most holy pope. He protested that he did not know anything about casting bronze, but he worked at it for more than a year, making a wretched failure of it, and ruining his health. Then he was ordered to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He protested that he did not know how to paint ceilings, it was hard and exhausting work; but again the pope insisted, and Michelangelo spent four years at this, painting his colossal and terrifying symbols upside down. Because he took so long at it, the pope was enraged, insisting upon seeing the work and criticizing it, flying into a fury and beating Michelangelo with his staff, then sending a messenger with five hundred ducats to salve his feelings.

Julius II died and Leo X came in. Michelangelo had made a new contract with the heirs of the dead pope to complete the tomb, and had started work on thirty-two colossal statues. But the new pope wanted Michelangelo's fame for himself, and so for ten years the poor sculptor was pulled and hauled between two rival groups. It was the fashion of other sculptors and painters, when thus loaded down with work, to hire a number of assistants and put the job through in a hurry. But Michelangelo suffered from conscientiousness; he thought that nobody else could do his work as he wanted it done, and he sweated and agonized and groaned under the burden of these contracts. More marble was needed, and he was dragged about between the rival owners of marble quarries. The unsuccessful owners intrigued with the boatmen to make it impossible for the marble to be moved; just like a certain teamsters' strike which I had occasion to investigate in Chicago some twenty years ago—the riots and mobbings and showers of brick-bats and broken heads and bullet-riddled bodies were caused by a great mail-order house having paid for a strike against a rival mail-order house!

There came another pope, this time a Medici. He wanted a tomb to his ancestors, who were splendid and wealthy merchants in Florence. Also there was to be a colossus in the Medici gardens, a difficult matter, because of the lack of room; Michelangelo discussed the problem

in a letter to a friend, which has come down to us. Read this picture of a man of genius trying to please a wealthy and fastidious patron:

I have thought about the Colossus; I have indeed thought a great deal about it. It seems to me that it would not be well placed outside the Medici gardens because it would take up too much room in the street. A better place, I think, would be where the barber's shop is. There it would not be so much in the way. As for the expenses of expropriation, I think to reduce them we could make the figure seated, and as it could be hollowed, the shop could be placed inside so the rent would not be lost. It seems to me a good idea to put in the hand of the Colossus a horn of abundance, and this could be hollow and would serve as a chimney. The head could also be made use of, I should think; for the poultryman, my very good friend who lives on the square, said to me secretly that it would make a wonderful dovecote. I have another and still better idea—but in that case the statue must be made very much larger, which would not be impossible, for towers are made with stone—and that is that the head should serve as a bell-tower to S. Lorenzo, which now has none. By placing the bells so that the sound would come out of the mouth it would seem as if the giant cried for mercy, especially on holidays when they use the big bells.

Michelangelo was in Florence when the republican revolution against the Medici took place. The artist sympathized with the revolutionists, against his patrons; he proposed to make for the revolutionists a gigantic statue of David and Goliath, but they decided he had better use his energies in fortifying the walls! When the city was taken, and the slaughter of the rebels began, Michelangelo hid for a month or two. Then he was commanded to come forth and resume his task of glorifying his conquerors! He did so, and was put to work on the tomb of the Medici. Needless to say, the figures on the tomb are not figures of serene contentment and spiritual peace! Romain Rolland describes them as an "outburst of despair" whereby the sculptor "drowned his shame at raising this monument of slavery."

Another pope came, and wanted Michelangelo for his chief glorifier. The artist pleaded his old contracts, but the pope was furious, and commanded him to tear them up. He was put to work on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, and the result was the marvelous painting, "The Last Judgment," in which all the terrors and torments of the Middle Ages are summed up. It was one of the world's greatest paintings; but the pious of the time were shocked,

and the pope put some of his other painters to putting panties on the nude saints. From time to time other shocked ecclesiastics had this or that article of clothing painted into the picture; and because they used any color they happened to have lying about, we can now form little idea of Michelangelo's vision of the Day of Doom.

All this time the artist was being hounded by the heirs of his first pope; but the present pope insisted that he should be the architect of St. Peter's; so here we see the old man, over seventy, still fighting the grafters and hounded by conspirators. It appears that in Renaissance Rome, when a grafter was caught, and threatened to expose his fellow-grafters, he was shot, and the world was told that he had committed suicide; exactly as it happens in Washington, D. C., in these our days of oil-thieves and bootleggers! Michelangelo was still afraid, as he had been all his life; but he was still more afraid of God, and determined to finish St. Peter's as a means of saving his soul at the Last Judgment.

So he stuck and fought the grafters. There came yet another pope—the artist had to win each one in turn, thwarting a whole new set of intriguing enemies. We find him at the age of eighty-eight, exposing thieves who are building the walls of St. Peter's out of rotten materials—and around him the thieves are stabbing each other. At last, at the age of ninety, he lies on his death-bed, his terrific labors at an end; and between his dying gasps he confides to a friend his one regret, that he has to die just when he has succeeded in learning the alphabet of his art!

## CHAPTER XXXII

### WHO IS CRAZY?

When civilization emerged from the Dark Ages, the fighting man went about with a hard-shell covering, like a crab, and was called a knight. Both he and his horse underwent a long training, and when it was finished he was a fighting engine which could roll over anything else existing in the world. He went on crusades, and drove back the Saracen and the Turk from Europe. In these days of real and cruel danger he produced a genuine Art of Power: for example, "The Song of Roland," an eleventh

century French poem, telling of a terrific all-day battle against invading infidel hordes.

But afterwards, when chivalry had become established, it developed its Art of Beauty; a fantastic literature about ideal beings, who conformed to an artificial and complicated code of etiquette, and spent their time rescuing beautiful young ladies from the claws of various monsters. There grew up a whole genealogy of these literary knights, and enormous long poems were composed about them. When I was at Columbia University, acquiring culture, one of the tasks set me was the reading of Ariosto, an Italian poet of the sixteenth century, and I valiantly struggled through a dozen cantos of these absurd adventures. They resemble a Griffith moving picture, in which there is a villain engaged in an elaborate process of raping a beautiful virgin, while the gallant hero is galloping on his way to a rescue. But Ariosto regales us with more details of the attempted rape; for in these old times people were not afraid of the animal aspects of life.

In the distant island of Britain some rough country fellows trained themselves to shoot arrows through the joints of the knightly armor. A little later came the invention of gunpowder, and that finished the hard-shell crabs on horseback. But the literary world also resembles a crab, in that it walks backward, with its eyes on the past. Invariably you find that what is called scholarship and culture is several generations behind the practical life of men; and so the poets went on composing elaborate and fantastic romances of chivalry. The test of excellence in literature was the refinement and elegance and remoteness from life of this perverted leisure-class art: until Cervantes came along and laughed it to death.

He was born in Spain in the middle of the sixteenth century, noble but poor. He first lived his great book, and then in old age he wrote it. He went to Rome in the retinue of a papal ambassador, and later on took up the chivalrous career, a crusade. The Turks were in possession of the Mediterranean, and the Spaniards were trying to drive them out; Cervantes, though ill of a fever, fought desperately at the battle of Lepanto, and was twice wounded. After five years of such war he was sailing home, when the Turks captured him, and for several years he was a slave in Algiers—a gallant and romantic

slave, the darling of his companions and the terror of his masters. He made several attempts to escape, and finally was ransomed by his relatives, and came home to Spain, crippled and poor—to reflect, like so many returned soldiers, upon the bitterness of dead glory.

He became a government agent, collecting naval stores. He was not a great success: one of his subordinates defaulted, and he was put in prison. He lived in straitened circumstances, in a household with five women relatives and his sense of humor. Then he tried writing; for twenty years he wrote every kind of thing which a man of his time could imagine would bring a living, but all in vain. He was not a university man and so the critics of his time considered him presumptuous in attempting to break into their sacred ranks. Until he was fifty-eight his life was a failure.

Then he hit upon the idea of ridiculing the established literature of chivalry, by bringing it into contact with the every-day realities of Spain. He created a character very much like himself; except that the old Don Quixote had read so many romances that his head was turned, and he began to take them seriously, mounted his old nag and rode out to rescue damsels, and to mistake a barber's basin shining in the sun for a helmet, and wind-mills for giants who must be overthrown. The story rambles along from one comical adventure to the next, and brings in almost every type of person in Spain. It became an instant and enormously popular success; but poor Cervantes got practically nothing out of it, because editions were pirated all over the country. He was a failure to the end—and curiously enough, did not get any satisfaction even from his fame. He was ashamed of his popular book, and quite sure that mankind would some day appreciate his long poems, "The Journey to Parnassus," and the pastoral romance, "Galatea," and the romantic poem, "Persiles and Sigismunda."

Many of the world's greatest writers have thus fallen victim to culture-snobbery. Shakespeare was despised by the academic critics of his own time, and apparently did not think enough of his own plays to see that posterity got a correct edition of them. When I was a boy we all read "Tom Sawyer" and "Huckleberry Finn," and "laughed our heads off" over them; but if anybody had

suggested to us that Mark Twain might be one of the world's great writers, we should have thought it a Mark Twain joke.

"Don Quixote" was produced, definitely and deliberately, as a piece of propaganda. We no longer know even the names of these long-winded romances of chivalry, so we do not realize that the author, in ridiculing them, is trying to teach us something. Also, there is another kind of propaganda that Cervantes put into the book, his ideas concerning one of the gravest problems confronting mankind through the ages. What shall be the relation of the idealist, the dreamer of good and beautiful things, to the world of ugliness and greed in which he finds himself? He has a vision of something splendid, but the world knows nothing about that vision, and cannot be made to understand it; if he tries to apply it, the world will call him crazy, it will treat him so badly that before he gets through he may be really crazy. But what, after all, is it to be crazy? Is it to believe in the possibility of something splendid in life? Or is it to believe that life must always be the hateful and ugly thing we now see it?

Nobody can be sure just how much Cervantes realized all this himself. There are many cases of men of genius writing, out of their sorrow and their laughter, things more wise and more deep than they know. Did Shakespeare intend Shylock to be a comic character, to be howled at and pelted by the Jew-hating mob of his time, or did he realize that in this half-comic, half-tragic figure he was voicing the grief and protest of a persecuted race?

What Cervantes has done in "Don Quixote" is to supply the critics and interpreters with material for speculation through many ages to come. He gave his crack-brained old gentleman a devoted servant, with no particle of his master's idealism or insanity. Sancho Panza is entirely normal, from the world's point of view, a sturdy and practical fellow; yet he gets into just as many absurd scrapes as his master—because he is ignorant, and is betrayed by his own greed. So we are brought back again and again to the question: Who is it that is really crazy in this shifting and uncertain world? Is a reader of literature insane because he sets out to apply the ideas of that

literature in real life? Or does insanity lie with writers who produce and critics who praise literature which cannot be applied to real life, and is not intended to be so applied? If, as I believe, the latter answer is correct—then how many foolish persons there are writing books today!

It is interesting to note how many of the world's great monuments of art were produced by men who saw their country traveling the road to ruin, and pleaded in vain with the ruling classes. Cervantes himself was a devout Catholic, and would not have understood us if we had told him that Don Quixote typified the Spain of his time; the Spain which believed that the human mind could be shackled by religious bigotry, and forced by dungeon and torture and the stake to accept a set of theological dogmas. The Spaniards slaughtered or drove into exile their most intelligent population, the Moors; and Cervantes approved it. They set out to conquer the world for their hateful faith, and Cervantes saw their powerful Armada overthrown and destroyed by the little ships of sturdy, independent Englishmen, who had recently kicked out the pope from their country and taken charge of their own thinking. This pope had by formal decree presented England to Spain; but the old, crack-brained Don Quixote empire had been unable to take possession, and the sad gentleman-soldier, Cervantes, died without having understood any of these world-events.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### OGI, ANGLOMANIAC

Says Mrs. Ogi: "This is getting to be quite a respectable literary book: the very thing for club ladies here in Southern California, who hire somebody to read books for them, and tell them what the books are about. Here you've read thousands of books for them!"

Says Ogi: "They'll get all the culture of the ages in a lecture lasting three-quarters of an hour. I remember your telling how the Negro mammies chew up the babies' food for them, and then feed it back into the babies' mouths."

"Yes, but don't you tell that!" cries Mrs. Ogi.

"A little too Renaissancy?" laughs her husband.

"With reasonable care," persists the other, "you can break into literary society with this book. I understand you're leading up to English literature; and that is where respectability begins and ends."

"You forget my Russian and German readers. Also, I'm sorry to report, we have to have another chapter of economics and politics."

"What's happened now?"

"Free institutions have got a new start, and we have to understand the process. We have to make an appraisal of the parliamentary system; and if we make one that is just, we shall displease all parties to the controversy. You remember how during the war this Ogi family used to argue until three o'clock in the morning. The most difficult question in all history had to be decided, and kept decided for four years. Was there really a choice between British capitalism and German autocracy? Was there any real life left in the parliamentary system, anything worth saving in political democracy; or must we go over to working class dictatorship? We listened to the partisans of each side as they stormed at us; there were millions of separate facts, and we had to appraise them and strike a balance. And just when we thought we had it, some Irishman or Hindoo would come along with fresh examples of British governmental imbecility."

"But what's that got to do with the book?" demands Mrs. Ogi.

"We have to make the same decision in our study of world culture. Here is Elizabethan England, and we have to appraise it, and appraise Shakespeare. Are we going to agree with Bernard Shaw and scold him because he isn't a Socialist? Are we going to agree with Tolstoy and scrap him because he isn't a saint? Evidently I'm expected to do those things. Here's a letter from George Sterling, who disapproves most strenuously of my thesis, but who says, 'From your point of view Shakespeare is your biggest and most vulnerable game.' "

"Well," says Mrs. Ogi, "what's Shakespeare to you, or you to Shakespeare?"

"For one thing, he's an old friend. For another, he's a whole universe in himself—"

"Surely a respectable opinion!"

"I'm sorry to be respectable, but I want to be just. It is easy to name great and important qualities that Shakespeare lacked, and damn him for that lack. On the other hand, one can think of hideous qualities he lacked—and honor him for their absence. Most important of all, he wasn't a medieval bigot. If he doesn't ascend to the heights of moral idealism, at least he avoids wallowing in what Sterling calls 'the liquid manure of superstition.' He is a modern man, who looks at life with clear eyes, and judges it on its own merits. Coming from Catholic Europe to Elizabethan England is like coming out of a morgue, and standing on a headland where the wind blows from the sea. Shakespeare knew that, and all the men of his time knew it; they were defending themselves from the Inquisition, they were saving the race-mind.

"The future world poet was twenty-four years old when the Spanish Armada was harried down the English channel by the little ships of Drake and Frobisher. He had already come up to London, and perhaps he heard the guns. Anyhow, all England knew that the pope had by formal decree turned over their country to be a vassal of Spain; they knew that King Philip was preparing against them the most powerful fleet in history. They waited, in just such an agony of suspense as we knew during the long struggle in France. And just as Æschylus was inspired by the battle of Marathon to write Greek patriotic propaganda, so Shakespeare was inspired by the defeat of the Armada to write English patriotic propaganda. Now, in weighing the value of that propaganda, we have to judge the society in which Shakespeare lived, the balance of democratic and aristocratic forces, of progress and reaction it contained. We can't do that without a theory of political evolution—"

"I'll tell you what you do," says Mrs. Ogi. "You start in and tell us some facts about Shakespeare's plays, and what's in them, and work in your theory of political evolution as you go along. Then, as I go along, I'll take a pencil and mark most of it out!"

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### PHOSPHORESCENCE AND DECAY

A few months ago I had the pleasure of spending twenty-four hours with a Chicago millionaire who specializes in knowing all there is to know on the subject of ciphers. During the war he gave our army practically all its information on this subject; so precious was his knowledge that, for fear the enemy might get him, he was kept for a year and a half locked up in the fire-proof, bomb-proof, burglar-proof and bullet-proof vault where his books and manuscripts are preserved.

Sitting in this vault, the owner showed me the greatest collection of Bacon and Shakespeare first editions in America. For several hours he pointed out the ciphers in these editions, and coming home on the train I read the narrative which is hidden in these ciphers, the secret life of Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, wherein he claims to have been a natural son of Queen Elizabeth, and the author of most of the plays attributed to William Shakespeare. It seems strange that one has to learn about these things in French; but so it stands, in a series of articles by General Cartier, published in the "Mercure de France," September, 1922.

If I were going to have an opinion on this subject, I should want at least two years to devote, without interruption, to a study of this cipher literature, and to the lives of Bacon and Shakespeare, and a comparison of their literary styles. Lacking this leisure in the present crisis of man's fate, I content myself with saying that here is one of the most fascinating mysteries in the world, and that I am not one of those comfortable people who know a thing to be impossible, merely because it is new and strange. Having said this much, I proceed upon the orthodox assumption that the plays attributed to William Shakespeare were written by the actor of that name.

He was born in 1564 at Stratford-on-Avon, his father being a merchant who early fell into misfortune. There are legends that the son was wild, and ran away to London to escape prosecution for deer-stealing. He became a hanger-on of theatrical companies, held horses at the doors of theaters, became connected with the Duke of

Leicester's company, acted in various plays, was called upon to revise and patch up manuscripts, and finally wrote plays of his own which were popular successes. He made money, bought several pieces of property at Stratford, won the friendship of some of the powerful and great, and finally returned to his home town, to die at the age of fifty-two.

That is all we know about the greatest poet of all time. How he managed to escape attention, how above all he failed to see to it that the world got authentic copies of his plays, is a mystery only partly explained by the fact that playwriting and acting were disreputable occupations. Actors had been strolling vagabonds, liable to be thrown into jail by any constable, like a workingman out of a job in the United States. Only by getting the protection of some noble earl could they be safe from persecution; and if you had become a friend of noble earls, and a gentleman of property in your home-town, you did not boast of plays you had written, any more than if you lived on Fifth Avenue today you would boast of a saloon you had once kept.

Shakespeare's first plays are romantic comedies in the style of the time. It was the tradition of the pastoral, fostered by elegant ladies and gentlemen who know nature as a place for picnics. It is a world of beauty, wit and "charm"; everybody is young, everybody's occupation is falling in love with some other pretty body, and problems exist only to be solved in the last act.

When I was young I saw Julia Marlowe in "As You Like It," and was ravished with delight. Now I look back on it, in the broad daylight of my present knowledge about life; I recall the thousand traps into which I fell because of ignorance of sex, ignorance of money, ignorance of almost everything about my fellow human beings. I recall the people I have known who fell into these same traps, and were not able to extricate themselves, but paid for their romantic illusions with poverty, drunkenness, disease, divorce, insanity, suicide. So I am compelled to declare that these "charming" comedies are as false to life as the average moving picture of our time, in which the problems of labor and capital are solved by the honest labor leader marrying the daughter of the great captain of industry.

I have to go further and maintain that this betrayal of life was deliberate; the writer himself knew more than he told us. Shakespeare is fond of jeering at the "groundlings," and those who stoop to tickle their unwashed ears. In the Shakespearean theater the cheap seats were in the pit, or what we call the orchestra; the aristocrats sat on the sides of the stage, and frequently got drunk, and amused themselves by sprawling in their seats and tripping up the actors and guying the show. These elegant ones were not "groundlings," and it was no disgrace to a romantic poet to rise in the world by giving them what they wanted. Shakespeare was even cynical enough to laugh at them for their silly taste; he called one of his comedy successes "As You Like It," and another "Twelfth Night, or What you Will."

This man was gifted with the most marvelous tongue that has yet appeared on earth. Golden, glowing, gorgeous words poured out of him at a moment's notice all his life; he covered everything he wrote with the glamour of poetry. This gift was his fortune; but also it was a trap, because it saved him the need of thinking. It is a trap for us, because it tempts us into sharing his emotions without thinking. But force yourself to think, ask yourself what is the actual value of the ideas the mighty poet is expressing, and you discover that many of them are commonplace, many are worldly and cheap, many are the harsh prejudices of his time and class.

In these early days Shakespeare wrote a long narrative poem, which helps us to know him. It is dedicated to the young Earl of Southampton, his patron, and is called "Venus and Adonis"; a typical example of the pseudo-classical romantic rubbish which the cultured world of that time called "art." Nature has provided for the mixing and distributing of the qualities of living creatures by a system of sex exchanges. Throughout the higher forms of life, and with men and women in their primitive, natural condition, the act of sex fertilization occupies less than the entire time of the creature. But now a leisure-class arises, parasitic upon its fellows; and the members of this class seek to divert their idle time by the endless elaboration of the sex function.

"Venus and Adonis" tells the story of an effort of the goddess of love to secure the sexual attentions of a reluc-

tant youth. The striking thing about the poem is the extent to which the Greek ideal of the goddess of fecundity has been debased—I will not say to the animal level, because the animals are decent and sensible in their sex affairs; I say to the level of the high-priced brothel, where the jaded rich are beguiled. Venus in this poem has no idea of making herself spiritually or intellectually attractive to the youth; she does not know how to be sublime and goddess-like, she does not know how to be wise, or even to be witty and gay. She only knows how to force her unwanted flesh more and more persistently upon the youth, to wallow upon his body, disgusting both the youth and the reader.

The fact that "Venus and Adonis" is full of verbal splendor, like everything else that Shakespeare wrote, makes it more and not less offensive to an intelligent person. By means of our intelligence we have invented the microscope, and thereby we know that decay is not less decay because it happens to be phosphorescent. We can surely say that there was decay in the fashionable world of Shakespeare's time, when twelve editions of "Venus and Adonis" were called for, while for a mighty tragedy like "Othello" there was not demand enough to secure its printing until six years after its author was dead!

## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE GOOD MAN THEORY

When I was young the orthodox critics of Shakespeare taught, and everybody accepted the idea, that there was no poet who had been more aloof from his own work, and that it was impossible to tell anything about him from the characters he portrayed. But now comes Frank Harris with his book, "The Man Shakespeare and His Tragic Life-Story." Harris contends that no poet has revealed himself more continuously than Shakespeare; the character speaking out of the plays is that of a man tormented all his life by sensuality, and fighting in pain and bewilderment to save a brilliant intellect from ruin by excess.

Frank Harris is such a man himself; he makes no secret of the fact that this has been his tragic life-story. So, as we read the book, our first question is, to what

extent has Frank Harris read himself into Shakespeare. It has been a long time since I read the plays straight through, and I should want to do it again before I felt I had an opinion. Meantime, we can say this much: if the Shakespeare of Frank Harris is not Shakespeare, but a work of imagination, it is one of the most fascinating works of imagination in the world, fully as significant as any character in any of Shakespeare's plays.

All critics would assent to the statement that Shakespeare began with youthful glorification of his leisure-class friends, their graces and their charms; and that as the years passed he met with a series of disillusionments, which drove him to bitterness, almost to madness. But it is to be noted that throughout this period of disillusionment he remains purely personal, he never rises above the "good man" theory of life. You know how it is in our politics; if there is corruption, it is because we have elected bad men to office. The test of one's ability to think straight on social questions is the outgrowing of this "good man" theory.

"Just a moment," says Mrs. Ogi, who has not entirely outgrown this theory herself. "Do you deny that there are some things a good man can do in the world that would not be done otherwise?"

"Of course; I'm willing to admit that any social system would work, if we could manage to get good men in charge, and to keep them there. The trouble about evil systems is that they keep good men out of power; they turn good men into bad men, even before they get into office. They keep us from finding the good men; they make us think that bad men are good—until ruin has come and it's too late."

"But think of the frightful pictures that Shakespeare drew of evil men in power!"

"Shakespeare was a man of refinement, he loathed brutality and cruelty. That was a part of his propaganda, his hatred of power blindly used; he comes back again and again to cry out against it, to defend the gentle and the innocent and the kind. In those ways he was far ahead of his time; for those things we love him, they help to make him a world poet. But here is the point—with Shakespeare it is all a family matter, inside the leisure class. Some bad member of the family has got power,

and our attention is concentrated upon turning him out, and putting in some good member of the family, who will make wiser use of power.

"We shall find that the leisure-class artist is frequently permitted this kind of criticism. He has his friends among the ruling class, he comes to think of himself as belonging; so he has a right to find fault. You know how it is with Mrs. Ogi; she will say things about her own family—they are ignorant, they are arrogant, they are this and that. But it is the part of discretion for her husband to remain silent at such times. Mrs. Ogi will entertain the company with tales about the absent-mindedness and general absurdity of her own husband; but it will be the part of discretion for the company to dissent gently from such ridicule."

"If you stay married to me long enough," says Mrs. Ogi, "you will know enough about human nature to be able to write a novel. But now we are talking about Shakespeare. Aren't you ahead of the time in expecting him to have revolutionary feelings?"

"Not at all. There was plenty of revolt, both political and social, in Shakespeare's day; there had been two centuries of social protest before he was born. John Ball, the rebel priest, had been hanged and quartered for asking the dangerous question:

> 'When Adam delved and Eve span
> Who then was the gentleman?'

"So, if Shakespeare had wanted to cast in his lot with the poor he had his opportunity. But there was nothing of that sort in him. He was a brilliant youth who had come up to London, poor and friendless, to become intimate with noble earls and wealthy gentlemen, to dedicate his poems and sonnets to them, and have his plays produced by their licensed companies. If they proved faithless, if they insulted and humiliated a man of genius, if their brilliant ladies and dashing maids of honor intrigued with him and then betrayed him—he would fly into a rage and write plays of almost insane fury, such as 'Timon of Athens' and 'King Lear,' or pictures of grim and somber cruelty such as 'Measure for Measure.' But when these plays failed, he would learn his lesson and go back to writing romantic dreams, pretty fairy stories like

'A Winter's Tale' and 'The Tempest.' In these latter we find the wistful sadness of the old man who has learned that life is not the beautiful thing it ought to be, but who sighs in vain for an all-powerful magician to come and set it right. Again, you see, the 'good man' theory; while the social classes whose destiny it is to abolish parasitism are the object of Shakespeare's haughty and aristocratic sneers."

"Ah, now!" says Mrs. Ogi. "That's the part of the story you're saving for a climax!"

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### COMIC RELIEF

Shakespeare's historical plays cover a period of three hundred years; the breakdown of the feudal system, and its replacement by a monarchy more or less controlled by a parliament. We have ten plays dealing with this period. Some of them Shakespeare wrote entirely, getting his data from old chronicles; others he worked over from older plays. He was careless about his facts; and how little grasp he had of fundamentals you may judge from the circumstance that "King John" does not even refer to the signing of Magna Charta. He might easily have had a character in this play make a speech on the subject of the people binding the insolence of their rulers. But he had no interest in such matters.

What Shakespeare did was to make a series of chronicle plays dealing with the intrigues and quarrels and fightings of the English nobility. He followed tradition, but never hesitated to change the characters in order to heighten the dramatic interest. The result has replaced English history in the minds of all English school-boys, and those grown-up school-boys called statesmen. Their national poet flatters their vanities and encourages their insular prejudices. He did not like the Irish, he did not like the Welsh, he did not like the Scotch, he did not like the French, and of course he did not like the Spaniards. He liked the Romans, apparently because they resembled the English ruling classes.

John of Gaunt in his dying speech proclaims England in a series of rapturous similes "this other Eden, demi-

paradise . . . this happy breed of men, this little world, this precious stone set in the silver sea . . . this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England." . . . And that is all right, that is the correct way for Englishmen to feel about England. But do they permit Frenchmen to feel that way about France, to love and defend their country, and manage it in their own way? The answer is, they do not. Frenchmen are to see English kings laying claim to their throne; they are to see English armies invading their country, destroying their cities and laying waste their fields; and they are to hear the great poet of England cheering on the invader with his golden eloquence, burdening his play with wearisome speeches to prove the validity of the English claim to the throne of France, and explaining to Frenchmen that it is for their own good that their country is invaded by a superior race.

Stranger yet, we shall find American scholars and critics enraptured over such English imperialist poetry! I go to my local library to see what the learned gentry have to say on this subject, and the most up-to-date thing I find is a book called "English History in Shakespeare's Plays," by a professor of a university in Louisiana. He quotes the passage in which Henry V incites his troops to the attack on Harfleur:

> Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,
> Or close the wall up with our English dead.

Says our scholar: "We are now greeted by the noble strain: a strain unworn by constant quotation, unhackneyed by trite allusions. Like the splendid harmonies of a master-musician it throbs and thrills us as we read, in spite of the declamations of the schoolroom and the parsing exercises of childhood."

Joan of Arc arose to inspire her people to drive out these invaders; and the English burned her as a witch. A hundred and sixty years had passed—surely time enough for sober second thought, surely time for England's national poet to do what he could to wipe this blot from his country's good name. But the maid of Orleans had to look elsewhere for vindication than to Shakespeare, friend of the rich and powerful, who never advocated an unpopular cause in all his forty plays. He represents Joan according to the basest of the prejudices of his "ground-

lings"; a vain, boastful creature, unchaste, and not denying her unchastity.

In the series of plays dealing with King Henry VI comes a still more significant incident, the rebellion of Jack Cade. For three hundred years the blood and treasure of the English people had been wasted in these foreign wars, and incessant civil wars of rival earls and dukes and barons. In the middle of the fifteenth century there was widespread distress, and in Kent occurred an uprising; a popular leader took the city of London, and forced some promises of reforms, and was then betrayed and killed. This incident fell into Shakespeare's lap—an opportunity for delicious gentlemanly wit at the expense of the exploited workers. "Be brave, then," cries Cade, "for your captain is brave and vows reformation. There shall be in England seven half-penny loaves sold for a penny, the three-hooped pot shall have ten hoops, and I will make it felony to drink small beer."

Just as soon as the Cade of Shakespeare gets power he sets himself up to be a nobleman, and offers to strike one of his followers dead for failing to recognize his claim. He addresses Lord Say, one of the persons against whom the indignation of the people had been roused:

> Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school; and whereas, before, our fathers had no other book but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing to be used; and contrary to the king, his crown and dignity, thou hast erected a paper mill. It will be proved to thy face that thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun, and a verb, and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear.

Such is the wit of our gentleman poet; and what is the comment of our Louisiana scholar? He tells us: "This savors of modern times. . . . The demagogue has the ignorance of his audience on his side. He has in behalf of his appeals that sullen jealousy of the masses who are conscious of classes, that is, of a caste above them and more accomplished." To be sure, the Louisiana professor admits that Shakespeare is here handling a great historic scene "flippantly"; but then, you see, the poet had such a good excuse! He was "sorely in need of comedy for the tragic drama of 'Henry VI'"! But I ask: why could he not have made up some comedy dealing with noble lords and gentlemen?

The answer is: It is a tradition of the leisure-class literature of England that the sufferings of the rich and powerful are dignified tragedy, while the sufferings of the poor are "comic relief." The only way a poor person of any sort can get Shakespeare to take him seriously is by being a devoted servant of some wealthy and powerful person; for example, Old Adam in "As You Like It," a part which, according to tradition, was played by Shakespeare himself. But when the common people try to do something for themselves, they are clowns and fools, yokels and tavern roysterers.

Take the comedy scenes in "Midsummer Night's Dream," when working people actually attempt to give a play. Shakespeare thinks that no idea could be more absurd. But nowadays working people give many plays in England; there are radical theater groups producing a new dramatic literature, in which it does not always happen that poor people are boobs, while ladies and gentlemen are refined and gracious. More significant yet, the descendants of those Jack Cade rebels, whom Shakespeare represents as objecting to grammar schools, have by a century-long struggle forced the establishment of free schools for the children of the people in every corner of England. They have some three thousand branches of the Workers' Education Association, in which the people learn about nouns and verbs at their own expense. Was ever a national poet more sternly rebuked by the people of his own nation?

Says Mrs. Ogi: "It is time for Jack Cade to make it felony to read Shakespeare."

"No," says Ogi; "we have to follow the example of the Catholic Church, whose priests are allowed to read prohibited books for purposes of controversy. But certainly it is time for us to get clear in our minds that Shakespeare is a poet and propagandist of the enemy; for the present, at any rate, a burden upon the race mind. He is the crown and glory of the system of class supremacy, and a magic word used by every snob and every time-server in the place of straight thinking and the reality of life."

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### PRAISE FOR PURITANS

Says Mrs. Ogi: "From the title of this chapter I judge that we here begin our long-anticipated debate with H. L. Mencken!"

"No," replies her husband, "we shall hew to the line of John Milton; but of course, if one of the chips happens to hit Mencken in the eye—"

"He will let us know," says Mrs. Ogi.

"First we have to have some of the despised sociology. We have to mention that human institutions arise, and serve their day, and then degenerate. The shell which at one time protects the crab becomes an encumbrance and has to be split and cast off. The English monarchy once served to break the power of the rebellious nobles, and to give the country unity; but now came Parliament, pushing the kings aside. The people who brought about that change were the Puritans: and for a century they represented such freedom of conscience and freedom of intellect as England had. Incidentally, they settled the North American continent, cleared out the savages, and made a civilization. We owe them more than we owe to any other single group; and if nowadays we identify Puritanism with the Society for the Prevention of Vice, we shall be just as narrow and as bigoted as Anthony Comstock himself."

Says Mrs. Ogi: "There goes a chip straight for Mencken's eye!"

The society in which John Milton grew up was very much like the Harding-Coolidge era which we know. There was the same raffish crew in control of government, selling everything in sight, and trampling civil rights. Men were thrown wholesale into prison, they were beaten and tortured for their opinions' sake. A small handful stood out, and suffered martyrdom; they appealed to the public, and the public seemed dead and indifferent—exactly as it seems today.

John Milton had a fortunate and happy youth. His father was prosperous, and gave his son the best guidance and education. At Christ's College they called the boy "the lady," because he was beautiful and refined. He re-

turned to his father's home to live a life of quiet study, and to write poems of imperishable beauty. If "art for art's sake" degenerates care to know how poetry can have all the graces and sensuous charms, and still be clean, they are referred to these early poems of the young English Puritan. It is worth while to point out explicitly how little his creed meant narrowness and contempt for art. All that came later, as a result of the civil war. But Milton in his youth acquired all the culture of his time; he was a thorough-going humanist, personally graceful and attractive; he traveled in Italy and met the leading men of his age, including the old blind Galileo, who had been forced under threat of torture to recant his belief that the earth moves around the sun.

The efforts of the most Catholic King Charles I to break the parliament of England brought Milton home from Italy. The parliament resisted, and civil war broke out, and he put aside his poetry and teaching, and plunged into the work of saving free government. Even today we find leisure-class critics bewailing the fact that a great poet should have wasted himself in a political career. But I venture the opinion that John Milton has given us more great poetry than we take time to appreciate; and it was worth while also to give us a life, and demonstrate that a poet can be a man.

For twenty years John Milton was the world voice of the Republican cause. In order to defend it he made himself master of the finest English prose style known up to that time. He defended his cause also in Latin, in French, and in Italian; he defended it so well that it now prevails over most of the world, and so we fail to realize what it seemed in the poet's day. The parliamentary army met the king in battle, and took him prisoner, held him for three years, and then, because of his infinite and incurable treachery, tried him and cut off his head. To the orthodox respectability of the seventeenth century this was the most horrible thing that had happened since the crucifixion of Christ.

You know how Bolsheviks and Socialists are reputed to practice free love, and worse yet, to preach it. John Milton was that kind of wicked person, also. He married a giddy young Royalist wife, and she left him; whereupon he wrote two pamphlets in favor of divorce.

When he could not get permission to print such diabolical documents, he printed them without license; and when he was attacked for this, he published another pamphlet, maintaining the unthinkable theory that men should be free to print what they pleased. I have seen, within a few miles of my own home, bookstores and printing offices raided, and their contents smashed and burned, both by mobs and by officers of the law; I have seen one of my friends fined thirty thousand dollars for publishing a book in favor of the atrocious idea that human beings should not shed one another's blood; so I believe that I can understand how this Puritan poet was regarded by the cultured world of his time.

He was a grim fighter. It was the fashion in those days to abuse your opponents, and Milton gave as good as he got. People who think that Upton Sinclair is too personal in his controversial writing—

"Won't think it any the less because he compares himself with Milton!" says Mrs. Ogi. "Go on with your story."

So her husband confines his statement to the fact that Milton never engaged in a fight except for human liberty. At the crisis of his country's peril he was told he had abused his eyes, and that if he did not rest them, he would go blind. He wrote another pamphlet in defense of his cause, thus deliberately sacrificing his sight in the effort to save the republican government. The sacrifice was in vain, for Cromwell died, and the government went to pieces, and the raffish rout came back; "bonnie Prince Charlie," lecherous, treacherous and vile, with all his herd of noble plunderers. John Milton, foreign secretary out of a job, went into hiding, and his books were burned by the public hangman; later he was arrested and fined—they would have liked to have the hangman deal with him also, but did not quite dare.

However, he lost most of his property; and there he was, old, blind and helpless—his very daughters caught the spirit of the new time, and stole his books and sold them to gratify their own desires. That is what happens to men who consecrate their art to a cause; and somehow they have to rise above such circumstances, maintain the supremacy of the human spirit, "and justify the ways of God to man."

The psychoanalysts have made us familiar with the word "sublimation." Without ever hearing the word, John Milton proceeded to sublimate his sufferings and his balked hopes into one of the greatest of the world's poems. The first point to get clear about this poem is that it was a piece of propaganda, pure and simple, deliberately so made. Beauty and culture and charm—these things John Milton had known, and in his bitter old age he did not forget them; but the task to which he now set himself was the same task as Dante's to explain the universe and its divine governance.

The epic of English Puritanism has never won its due recognition abroad; the Continental critics have given preference to Byron, who was also a rebel, but a man of the world, a lover, and a lord. Albert Mordell of course includes "Paradise Lost" among his "waning classics"; he has an easy time pointing out the absurdities of its theology, and argues that the interest of the poem is bound up with these. For my part I say about it what I said about Dante; some of its propaganda is out of date, and some of it will be out of date when men cease to consecrate their lives to ends greater than themselves.

It is interesting to note how the spirit of Milton broke the fetters of his theology. According to that theology Satan was the father of evil, and there was no excuse for him; he had rebelled against a heavenly king who was all-wise and all-good. But Milton also had rebelled against a king, and could not forget the feeling; he poured his own revolt into the speeches of Satan, making him the most interesting character in the poem.

If you live in New York or visit there, you may see in the public library a painting of Milton as he sat in his home, dictating "Paradise Lost." We have a description from the pen of a visitor; it was a poor little house, with only one room to the floor, and the poet sat in a chair, in a rusty black suit, old and blind, pale and tormented with rheumatism. Ten pounds he got for England's great epic, and thirteen hundred copies of it were sold during his lifetime. Yet his spirit never wavered, and he lived to write "Samson Agonistes," a drama in the Greek style, neglected by the critics. As a rule there is nothing more futile than imitations of outworn art forms; but once in a while it happens that a man lives the old life, and can write in the

old manner. Milton writes a Greek drama about a Jewish strong man—and it turns out to be a picture of the poet's own soul at bay!

Having praised Milton highly in this chapter, I recall my opening statement as to the superiority of present-day technique. You will expect me to justify this, and an interesting opportunity presents itself here. In 1655 occurred a massacre of Swiss Protestants by Italian Catholics under the Duke of Savoy. Milton, being then in office as foreign secretary, wrote a sonnet voicing his indignation. It is rated by critics as one of the greatest of English sonnets. For your convenience I quote it:

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT

Avenge, O Lord! thy slaughter'd Saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old
When all our fathers worshipt stocks and stones.
Forget not: In Thy book record their groans
Who were Thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that roll'd
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To Heaven. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian field, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant, that from these may grow
A hundred-fold, who, having learnt Thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

Francis Turner Palgrave, named by Tennyson as the best judge of poetry of his time, says in the notes to his "Golden Treasury": "this 'collect in verse,' as it has been justly called, is the most mighty Sonnet in any language known to the Editor." So you see, we are setting a high standard. What modern work shall we compare with it?

In the year 1914 there occurred in Colorado, in the Rocky Mountains cold, the "Ludlow massacre" of the wives and children of miners on strike. It caused a demonstration in front of the office of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., at 26 Broadway, New York, about which you may read in "The Brass Check." A young poet who happened at that time to be my secretary, and who has since made a success as a novelist, was moved by these events to write a sonnet, which I sent to the Scripps newspapers, getting for the poet the unprecedented sum of twenty-five dollars. I now quote the sonnet, and invite you to study the two,

comparing them by all tests of poetry known to you. I give my own opinion: that in their propaganda impulse these two sonnets are identical; that in simplicity, directness, and fervor of feeling they are as nearly identical as two art works can be; and that in technical skill the modern work is superior.

TO A CERTAIN RICH YOUNG RULER

By Clement Wood

White-fingered lord of murderous events,
  Well are you guarding what your father gained;
  With torch and rifle you have well maintained
The lot to which a heavenly providence
Has called you; laborers risen in defense
  Of liberty and life, lie charred and brained
  About your mines, whose gutted hills are stained
With slaughter of these newer innocents.

Ah, but your bloody fingers clenched in prayer!
  Your piety, which all the world has seen!
The godly odor spreading through the air
  From your efficient charity machine!
Thus you rehearse for your high rôle up there,
  Ruling beside the lowly Nazarene!

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### COMRADE'S PROGRESS

There is another artist of English Puritanism we must not overlook. We shall have no trouble in proving this one a propagandist; so obviously was he preaching, that the critics of his own time overlooked him entirely. The elegant men of letters of the Restoration period, gossiping in their coffee houses, dicing in their taverns, and carrying on their fashionable intrigues, would have been moved to witty couplets by the notion that an ignorant tinker, a street-corner tub-thumper locked up in Bedford gaol, was engaged in composing one of the immortal classics of English literature. As soon might you attempt to tell one of the clever "colyumnists" of the New York newspapers, stumping his last cigarette in his coffee saucer at luncheon in the Algonquin, that an immortal classic of American literature was running serially in the "Appeal to Reason" or the "Daily Worker."

John Bunyan came from the lowest ranks of the people, those same louts and clowns whom Shakespeare delighted to ridicule. And he was quite as ridiculous as Shakespeare could have wished him; he saw visions, and was pursued by devils, and rushed out onto the street to save the souls of people as ignorant and unimportant as himself. Under the laws of England the saving of souls was a privilege reserved to the younger sons of the gentry, who got "livings" out of it; so John Bunyan was persecuted, precisely as ignorant and unimportant I. W. W. are persecuted in my neighborhood today. And he behaved exactly as the I. W. W. behave; that is, he stubbornly declined to change his opinions, or to cease proclaiming them on the streets. Sent to prison, he did what a number of the I. W. W. did in Leavenworth; despite the fact that he had a pregnant wife and four small children, one of them blind, he refused to give a purely formal promise to behave himself. This caused extreme embarrassment to humane magistrates, who didn't want to be hard on a poor crackbrain, but were sworn to uphold the majesty of the law.

So for twelve years John Bunyan stayed in jail and wrote "Pilgrim's Progress." Now my friend, Albert Mordell, includes it among his "waning classics." He says: "The story that children delight in the book and read it through is mythical; many children try to read it but usually drop it." Well, it so happened that when I read those words, I had been making a test on a ten-year-old boy, my own. We used to read it aloud, sitting in front of the fireplace on winter evenings; and of all the books we read, none created such excitement. It was difficult to keep on reading, because of the stream of questions: "What does that mean, Papa?" You see, allegories, which bore us adults, are fascinating to the child mind. Such a wonderful idea, when you first think of it—to embody moral qualities in living beings, and give them names, and send them walking out over the earth, to engage in adventures and contend with each other! To see the every-day problems of your own conduct unrolled before you in the form of a story!

My young friends of the radical intelligentsia, who used to live in Greenwich Village, but have now moved to Croton and Provincetown and Stelton to get away from the bally-hoo wagons, have been calling me a Puritan ever

since they knew me; and now they will smile a patronizing smile, hearing me endorse this old-fashioned Sunday school story. I can only record my conviction, that one does not escape the need of personal morality by espousing proletarian revolution. Even after the revolution, there will be moral struggles fought out in the hearts of men and women. I realize that morality is destined to become a science, and that by the study of psychology we shall abolish many problems of conduct; nevertheless, life will still require effort—there will remain the question of whether to study or not to study, and why!

I suggest to my young radical friends that they amuse an idle hour by applying "Pilgrim's Progress" to the great movement of our day. Instead of Christian, read Comrade; instead of Christian's burden, read a soap-box. You can always find some youngster to serve as traveling companion under the name of Hopeful. And very soon in your journey you will enter the Valley of Humiliation; very soon you will begin to meet Mr. Money-Love and Mr. Pliable; also Mr. Talkative will come in swarms to your studio parties. And By-Ends—he works beside you in every office; the fellow who takes care of himself and does not believe in going to extremes. And Mr. Worldly-Wiseman—perhaps you have a rich uncle who will serve; you can see him sitting in the padded leather chairs of any club. And when Comrade's Pilgrimage brings him to New York, he will see Vanity Fair, flaunting its glories up and down the avenue, protected by plate glass. And the fiend Appolyon—we have had two attorney-generals exactly cut for the rôle. If you think that a joke, it means that you have been playing the part of Mr. Facing Both-ways during the past ten years, and do not know about the realities of government by gunmen.

The forms of things change, but the inner essence remains the same, and you must learn to recognize it. The Slough of Despond, for example, is discovered in the bottom of the coffee-cups in which Greenwich Village now gets its bootleg gin. As for the Giant Despair—a singular transformation!—he is a pale-colored microscopic organism of cork-screw shape, lurking in the delicious intrigues of our gay and saucy young folks. As for the Interpreter's House, it is out of repair just now, having been hit by H-E shells in 1917. As for the Celestial City, which

we old fogies used to vision under the name of the Co-operative Commonwealth—the young people won't let us mention it any more; they tell us that propaganda is out of style, in these days of petting-parties and hip-pocket flasks.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### VANITY FAIR

We have been keeping low company for so long that the reader may be wondering: Were there no writers for ladies and gentlemen in the time of Milton and Bunyan? The answer is, yes; and we should pay a brief visit to that Vanity Fair which Bunyan saw through the bars of his prison.

There was a poet laureate, who did not go to prison but became the idol of his age, and the most prosperous writer up to that time. John Dryden was his name, and like Milton, he was born of a well-to-do Puritan family, and received the best education going. He was twenty-seven years old when Cromwell died, and he wrote heroic stanzas on the Lord Protector. He attached himself to his cousin, an official of the Puritan republic, expecting advancement; but he did not get it, so two years later, when the "bonnie Prince Charlie" came back to be crowned, the young poet welcomed him with a panegyric ode, several pages of ecstatic compliment—

> How shall I speak of that triumphant day
> When you renewed the expiring pomp of May?
> A month that owns an interest in your name,
> You and the flowers are its peculiar claim.

I am following the life of Dryden by Professor Saintsbury, an eminent scholar of the Tory way of thought, who has just immortalized himself by publishing a whole volume devoted to the literature of alcoholic liquor. This professor says everything that can be said in defense of Dryden, but the best he can say about this "Astræa Redux" is that in order to appreciate its beauties, you must forget the facts about the "bonnie Prince Charlie" and his reign. The professor lists a few of the facts you must forget: "the treaty of Dover and the closed exchequer,

Madam Carwell's twelve thousand a year and Lord Russell's scaffold." That is the way to read literature under the guidance of a leisure-class critic! As we used to say when we were children: "Open your mouth and shut your eyes, and I'll give you something to make you wise!"

The elegant literature of that time was described by the term "metaphysical," which meant that the poet exhausted his imagination in inventing quaint and startling conceits. For example, one of Dryden's noble patrons contracted smallpox, and the poet, describing his appearance, records that

> Each little dimple had a tear in it,
> To wail the fault its rising did commit.

By such personal attention to the rich and powerful John Dryden became the greatest poet of his century, and married the daughter of an earl. He took to writing heroic plays in the style of his time, such preposterous bombast that if I were to tell you about them you would think I was making them up. Then he wrote society comedies, also in the style of his time, which was such high-toned sex nastiness that if I were to write it today I should be taken up by the Shuberts and the Laskys, and paid as much as Cecil de Mille and Robert W. Chambers and Elinor Glyn rolled into one.

The "Restoration comedies" were much the same thing as our "bedroom farces," except that they were long drawn out; the seventeenth century audience was satisfied to listen to smart people gossiping about their vices, while our audience wants to see the smart people climbing through the transom in their pajamas. Also, the old comedies are difficult for us to understand, because the language of polite obscenity changes from age to age, and we don't always know what Dryden and Congreve and Wycherley are talking about. But we need not rack our brains; we may be sure that all their witticisms have reference to fornication and adultery. There was no other occupation for these "restored" ladies and gentlemen—except gambling and eating and drinking, and cheating and lying in order to get the money to pay for their elegant pleasures.

Dryden gained by this writing an income of a couple of thousand pounds a year, which was the top-notch for a

literary fellow in England. Also he became poet laureate, and an intimate of the king; in short, he reached the heights. But alas, greatness has its penalties, as the poet soon discovered, caught in the poisonous intrigues of a vile court. He was accused of having written a slanderous poem, and one of his noble enemies hired some bullies to beat him up one night. Also, a muck-raking parson by the name of Jeremy Collier came along and lashed him in a book entitled "A Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage." To all his other literary and political enemies the poet showed himself a voluble antagonist; but to the Reverend Jeremy he had nothing to answer.

He began, apparently, to realize the seriousness of life, and took to writing propaganda for his gang. He produced a series of political tracts, satirical and didactic verses upon which he expended great technical skill. Professor Saintsbury points out these literary beauties; but again he specifies: in appreciating them, the reader has to bear in mind that what Dryden proved today he may have disproved yesterday, and he may prove something different tomorrow. Lacking this acrobatic ability, I can only record my opinion, that these most famous verses are snarling and odious quarrels, of exactly as much importance to mankind as the yelps in a dog-fight.

One of them was a poem full of enraptured praise for the Anglican church. The poet at this time was listed for a salary of a hundred pounds a year as poet laureate; but the salary was badly in arrears, and somebody must have pointed out to him that his new sovereign, King James II, was an ardent Catholic. So the poet became converted to Catholicism, and wrote an equally enraptured poem in praise of that. But, alas! it was a bad guess; shortly afterwards His Most Catholic Majesty was kicked out of England, and William of Orange was brought over, and the country was Protestant again. This was the period when the Vicar of Bray had such a hard time holding his job; and our court poet also suffered, losing most of his perquisites, and having to go to work again.

He was an old man now, and decided to play safe; he made a verse translation of Virgil, for which nobody could scold him. Nobody did, and he died full of honors, and had a "sufficiently splendid funeral" in Westminster Ab-

bey, "with a great procession, preceded at the College by a Latin oration, and by the singing of Exegi Monumentum to music."

And so, if you like that sort of thing, there you have what you like; and if you have Dryden's talents, and are willing to sell them to the ruling classes, I can drive you over to Hollywood any day, and introduce you to the fellows who will start you off at twenty thousand a year, and raise you to two hundred thousand as soon as you have begun to deliver the goods.

## CHAPTER XL

### GLORY PROPAGANDA

In order to make a consecutive story we have followed the development of English art for a century and a half. We now go back to cover the same period on the Continent, where a new ruling class has acquired wealth and power and has ordered a supply of new artists.

The difference between France and England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may be summed up briefly. The English revolt against the Catholic machine was successful, therefore the spirit of the English race expanded, and new art forms were created. In France, on the other hand, the Catholic machine succeeded in crushing the Protestants; something over fifty thousand were slaughtered on St. Bartholomew's Eve; and therefore the art of France was held within the mold of the classical tradition. The Elizabethan drama grew out of the old miracle and mystery plays, a native product, crude, but popular and democratic. There existed such a native drama also in France; but it was scorned and repressed by authority, and cultured art followed the tragedies of Seneca, a Roman millionaire of the time of Nero, who had of course derived from the Greeks.

It may seem strange that Catholic absolutism should have made Greek and Latin art forms a part of its sacred dogma; but so it was. The doctors of the church in the Middle Ages had put together a theology, in part from the early Christian fathers, and in part from Athenian and Alexandrian philosophers. It was for denying Ptolemy's doctrine that the sun moved round the earth that

Galileo was forced to recant under threat of torture by the pope; and it was for denying the sacred "three unities," derived from Aristotle's "Poetics," that playwrights were critically tortured by the priests of orthodox culture.

These three dogmas of play-writing were unity of theme, unity of time, and unity of place. The first is, within reasonable limits, a natural requirement of any work of art; but unity of time, meaning that the play must happen within twenty-four hours, and unity of place, meaning that it must happen on one physical spot, are absurdities. It is hard for us to realize that such rules were compulsory upon any dramatist who wished to see his work upon the stage; it is harder yet for us to realize that such rules were used as weapons in the class struggle, along with the infallibility of the pope and the divine right of kings.

There arose in France a prelate of the grim and bloody kind, who became the king's minister, and directed the slaughtering of the Huguenots, and chopped off the heads of the rebellious nobles; he even forced the church to submit itself, and made his king the absolute ruler of France, so that a year after Richelieu's death it was possible for the king's son to ascend the throne, and to say, "I am the State," and have no one dispute him through his reign of seventy-two years. One of the engines of repression that Richelieu devised was the French Academy, to take charge of the language and art of the monarchy, and impose law and order by chopping off the literary heads of all rebels. This Academy became the ruling authority in cultured France, and has filled that rôle for three hundred years. Not merely has it served the ruling classes by maintaining tradition and discrediting every innovation in French letters; it has issued formal pronouncements against unorthodox social and political books—for example, Rousseau's "Social Contract." A list of the French men of letters who have been excluded from the "immortals" includes Descartes, Pascal, Molière, Saint-Simon, LeSage, Rousseau, Beaumarchais, Diderot, Compte, Proudhon, Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, Goncourt, Maupassant, Jaurès, Barbusse, Rolland.

The polite literature which reigned in Richelieu's time was known as "précieuse," and occupied itself in the making up of elaborate long similes, extending sometimes

through several pages. It was foppish and fantastic to the point of imbecility; and the makers of it were the darlings of Richelieu's Academy. There came up from the provinces a young lawyer by the name of Pierre Corneille, who began to write successful comedies, and received the high honor of being picked by Richelieu as one of five men to write dramas under his august direction. But Corneille, a man of genius, could not long submit himself to the head-chopping cardinal. He went his own way, and incurred the raging enmity of both Richelieu and his Academy.

He wrote a tragedy in Alexandrine verse called "The Cid," which was an enormous popular success. This Cid was a legendary hero of Spain, a "free captain"—that is, the head of an army of hired mercenaries, who went about fighting for anybody who would pay him. We are used to this system of "free captains" in the United States, where they are called private detective bureaus and strike-breaking agencies. They have armies of tens of thousands of fighting men, horse, foot and artillery, whom they move about from place to place for the crushing of union labor. So before long we shall see on Broadway or in Hollywood some young writer making a tremendous ruling-class drama out of the legendary career of Alan Pinkerton or William J. Burns. The great detective will be shown in love with the beautiful daughter of some labor leader, the tragedy coming when in the course of his duty the great detective has to kill the labor leader. That is the story which Corneille developed—except that of course, it was a rival prince whom the Cid was fighting. Needless to say, in order not to have his head chopped off by Richelieu, the playwright put his hero in the position of defending legitimacy.

But the poet had failed to respect the "three unities" in his tragedy; so, although acclaimed by audiences, he was viciously attacked by the academicians—one of them even challenged him to a duel! The Academy as a body was afraid to attack the play, but Richelieu forced it to take action. Corneille was not strong enough to withstand opposition such as this; in his future work he conformed to the rules, and became a humble pensioner of the cardinal. It is interesting to note that his genius began quickly to decline, and he had the humiliation of

living to old age and seeing himself scorned and neglected by the new generation. Thus Richelieu's Academy fulfilled at the outset its function, destroying the greatest tragic dramatist that France had produced, and suppressing for two hundred years the romantic movement in the French theater.

It is important to get clear the difference between the real classical art of the Greeks, and this imitation classical art of French absolutism. The Greek stage rules had been made to fit the facts of the Greek stage. Their tragedies had been enacted in a large open-air theater, and to keep the actors from looking too small they had worn high shoes, almost stilts, and had shouted to the audience through a megaphone disguised as a mask. Needless to say, they could not move quickly, and could not do anything but talk. Their tendency was to talk at great length —like mighty ships, which, having got under way, were not easily to be stopped.

But in the time of Corneille and his successors all that was gone; plays were acted in small, indoor theaters, and the characters might have been human and real. But the critical authorities ordained that the Greek conventions were sacred; so the characters of Corneille are stiff and stately, and stalk about hurling long, impassioned tirades at one another.

Nevertheless, two thousand years have not failed to make an impression upon the minds of men. The dark, overshadowing fate of the Greeks is gone, its place as director of events being taken by human ambition. Corneille's characters are embodiments of this or that passion. They are, of course, always aristocrats, the mighty and powerful of the earth; they are intended to be morally sublime, but to us they seem monsters of egotism. They want what they want when they want it, they smite their breasts and exclaim: "Moi! Moi! Moi!" There is war, splendid war, in which they gain the admiration and attention known as "glory." The tragedy comes because they cannot get all they want; they have weaknesses, especially love, which get in the way, and paralyze the will of mighty princes engaged in prevailing over each other.

At this time the Thirty Years' War was devastating Europe. It had begun as a religious war, an effort of Catholic Austria to crush German Protestantism; but it

had now degenerated into a clash of rival dynasties, with Richelieu, master intriguer, using the Protestants to put down the enemies of the French monarchy. The mother of the French king had been an Austrian princess, Catherine de' Medici, and she was intriguing against her son's country. She had been driven into exile by Richelieu, and was raising up armies against him; so, all over Europe, the people were being led out to slaughter at the whim of this vicious old woman. They were led out for one greedy prince or another; they were led out because the mistress of some king had been snubbed by the wife of some emperor; they were led out for an endless tangle of royal jealousies and noble spites.

And the function of the dramas of Corneille is to take us into the souls of these lawless aristocrats; all the powers of genius, all the resources of the stage are expended in order that we may share their furies, may strut the stage with them and deliver tumultuous tirades. For a time or two the experience is interesting; but then the novelty wears off, and we ask ourselves: Do I really care anything about these heroes? Do I want to share their feelings—or do I want to change the world, so that there may be no corner where such dangerous and destructive creatures can lurk? And so ends the glory propaganda of Corneille.

## CHAPTER XLI

### UNBRIDLED DESIRES

Louis XIV, the "grand monarch," ascended the throne of France in the year 1643, while Cromwell's "Ironsides" were fighting their king, and only six years before they cut off his head. A greater difference between two kingdoms could scarcely be imagined; and this difference is completely reflected in French and English art.

All the life of France was centered at the court. The monarch who was "the State" withdrew himself from Paris, and built a magnificent play-ground at Versailles; aqueducts were constructed, a barren waste was turned into a pleasure-park, whole forests of trees being moved and replanted. Great palaces arose; the architects and landscape gardeners, the sculptors and painters poured

out their treasures, to make this most wonderful garden of delight.

All over the land was a ruined peasantry; misery, starvation and ignorance, freedom crushed, justice flaunted, superstition and despotism enthroned. A nation was taxed bare to make the beauty and glory and luxury of this court. You might see the "grand monarch," with a huge powdered periwig on top of his head, in a costume of crimson and white brocaded with gold, advancing with solemn steps upon red-heeled shoes, and wielding a golden snuff-box covered with jewels. About him flock the courtiers, great nobles and ecclesiastics, now deprived both of their powers and their duties, and with nothing to do but dance attendance at court. Here also are the swarms of fine ladies, trained in the arts of seduction. In the morning the court rides forth in enormous hunting parties, pursuing stags imported from all over Europe. They spend the afternoons and evenings in feasting, gaming, gossiping, intriguing.

And here, of course, come the artists; poets and painters, dramatists and musicians, dancing masters and jugglers and makers of ballets and masques. The king who said, "I am the State," might equally have said, "I am Art." He and his court constituted audience and critics; either you pleased them, or as an artist you were dead.

It is interesting to note that the famous artists of that time all came from the middle classes. The great gentlemen scorned to work at art, as at anything else; they paid others to work for them. They were exacting paymasters, having high standards of perfection in technique, and the middle-class Ogis slaved diligently to polish and refine and beautify their productions.

War was far off from this splendid court, an echo of trouble in another world; so the sternness and sublimity of Corneille went out of fashion. Love was no longer a temptation and a weakness, but the delight and glory of the "great world." The source of human impulse was located in what the poets of those days called "the heart" —though we, by surgical investigations, have ascertained that it is located below the diaphragm.

There came a new dramatist to thrill this amorous company. His name was Jean Racine, and he also came from the middle classes. His genius brought him instant

success; he wrote an ode to the king, was awarded a pension of six hundred livres, and became an assiduous and successful courtier. He is, like Raphael, the perfect type of the ruling-class artist; fitting exactly to his age, with no ideals below it and none above it. His works represent perfection of technique, the ideal harmony of content and form, the Art of Beauty as it had not been seen upon the stage since the time of Sophocles.

Until late in Racine's life religion is purely formal in his work; his plays deal with the princely world. Society is fixed, and its forms ordained; nobody is rising and displacing anybody else, hence there can be no social drama. You play your part "in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call you"; and tragedy happens when somebody takes away from you the sexual gratification you crave. Everything has become personal; we are concerned with the jealousies, the fears, the loves and hates of aristocratic individuals. The heroes and heroines abandon themselves to their passions, they pour out floods of exquisite emotion. The scene is laid in "an apartment in a palace," and murder, suicide, insanity and despair lurk just outside the door.

They do not come upon the stage, because the classical tradition ordains that violent actions happen off the stage, and people rush on and tell us about them. We get the echoes of horror in the eyes and the voices of these people. It is curious to compare Racine's tragedies with those of Shakespeare, which jump you about among a score or two of places all over the earth, and bring on swarms of characters from every social class. In Racine, not merely are the lower classes excluded from the stage, the lower classes are excluded from existence. Three or four noble ladies and gentlemen stand in a room, and come and go, and make speeches to one another in marvelously polished rhymed couplets. They address long soliloquies to the air, they address imaginary beings, the heavenly powers of Christian mythology and Roman and Greek and Turkish and Celtic mythology; they call earth and sea and sky to witness the infinite wickedness and cruelty of their not being able to have what they want.

This is the height and perfection of art, according to the most fastidious and exacting of French standards. And is it propaganda? I do not see how anyone capable

of putting two thoughts together can question the fact. Here are the gods of a new hierarchy, princes and potentates, absorbing to themselves by divine right all the treasures of civilization. Here they are exhibited in all their splendor, one of the world's greatest poets devoting his technical skill to glorifying and exalting them. Storms of thrilling emotion are poured forth, and the crowds go mad with excitement. So ideals are created and standards set, which govern, not merely the art life, but the social and political and business life of the whole of society.

The poet himself lived this life of elegant egotistical passion; he was jealous and quarrelsome, and he followed the custom of the painters in using his mistresses as models for his female types. One of his tragedies became the cause of a ferocious court quarrel; a duchess hired another playwright and produced a rival play on the same theme, and hired a claque to applaud his play, and to hiss Racine's. This apparently frightened the poet; he lost his joy in the courtier life, became sick, and in orthodox Catholic fashion retired into mysticism, and wrote a play of religion, as unwholesome and remote from reality as his worldly plays.

The most famous of his tragedies is "Phedre," which tells about the wife of an Athenian king, who conceives an adulterous passion for her step-son, and when the youth repels her advances, accuses him falsely to his father, and brings about his death; after which, in a transport of shame, she poisons herself. For two centuries and a half this portrayal of unbridled desire has been the test of genius upon the French stage; eight generations of actresses have exhausted their skill in portraying it to eight generations of elegant ladies and gentlemen, living lives of the same unbridled desire.

In our time the great Phedre was Sarah Bernhardt, the "divine Sarah," as she was known to the leisure-class critics of my boyhood. Upon the stage she exhibited the unbridled desires of an ancient Greek queen, and in real life she exhibited the unbridled desires of a modern stage queen; a woman who never felt a social emotion, but squandered the treasure of various royal and plutocratic and literary lovers, who likewise had never felt a social emotion. We are privileged now to read the extremely stupid love-letters which King Edward of England wrote

to her, and learn what sums of money he paid to her, and what dignified court gentlemen he sent to make his assignations with her. We read also about her passion for Sardou, leisure-class playwright of her time, who created a host of splendid prostitutes and lustful queens, to enable this leisure-class divinity to sweep her audiences into ecstasy.

We today, possessing means of exploring the subconscious mind, understand these unbridled desires as symptoms of infantilism. Here are babies, still reaching out for the moon, and shrieking because they cannot have it; here are spoiled children, flattered by servants and fawned upon by slaves, indulged and petted, never adjusting themselves to the realities of life, but growing up to make heroes and heroines of tragedy. We no longer consider these creations sublime; we call them psychopaths, and the art which portrays them we call a bore.

As economists we have explored the social causes of such raging egotisms, and also the social consequences. The plutocracy is not the only class which has unbridled desires; the proletariat has its share, and if one class is permitted to gratify them, and to flaunt them before the world, the only possible consequence is a revolution of blind and bloody revenge. Queen Phedre, frenzied and horror-smitten, saw hell looming hideous before her staring eyes; but she saw no hell compared with what Racine's audience might have seen, had they been able to look forward a hundred years in French history, and to watch the starved and brutalized mob of Paris dancing the "Carmagnole" in the streets, while the guillotine rolled into its bloody basket the heads of the great-grandsons and great-granddaughters of those splendid, unbridled ladies and gentlemen who made up the "grand monarch's" splendid, unbridled court.

## CHAPTER XLII

### THE HARPOONER OF HYPOCRISY

In vain do kings and emperors set up the doctrine that art exists for courts; that only the great ones of the earth are the proper theme for art works, and courtiers and court critics the true judges of taste. Deeply planted in

the human heart is an instinct, declaring that all human beings are of consequence; and men of genius arise who follow that instinct, and write about ordinary people, and appeal to wider and wider groups of the community. We shall now see this happening to the exclusive and haughty court of the "grand monarch." A world genius appears, who breaks the established barriers, sets all France to arguing over his ideas, and helps to make the drama of Europe the social force which it is today.

He was the son of the royal upholsterer in Paris; that is to say, of a tradesman who had the job of repairing the soft and expensive cushions upon which this court reclined. But Molière, a volcano of energy and enterprise, did not take long to discover that he was not interested in cushioning a court. At the age of twenty-one he sold his claims to the family job, and started a theater on a tennis-court in Paris. It was a failure, and the young Molière was three times imprisoned for debt. But he would not give up; he organized a company to tour the provinces, and for thirteen years he lived a life of "one-night stands." It is a dog's life today, and must have been worse three hundred years ago, when actors were outcasts and almost outlaws. Catholic bigotry in France was as bitter against them as Puritan bigotry in England.

It was a hard school, in which Molière made no money and lost his health. But it was a way to make a tragi-comic dramatist, for it brought him into contact with every kind of human being. When he came to Versailles to become the king's favorite dramatist, he brought with him knowledge of something more than courtly intrigue; he brought the fighting spirit of a man who had been roughly handled, who had been poor and in jail, and who knew France as it was to the plain people.

Molière got a chance to produce plays before the king, including a couple of his own little farces. The king was then twenty-one years of age, curious about life, and not entirely in the hands of women and priests as he later became. Molière was thirty-seven when he produced his first significant work, "Les Précieuses Ridicules," a satire on the literary fashions of the time, according to which a mirror was called "the counsellor of the graces," and a chair "the commodity of conversation." Great ladies were accustomed to assemble to display their wit to one another,

and it was exactly like the literary tea-parties we have nowadays. I have pictured them in a chapter in "The Metropolis"—

"Go ahead with Molière!" says Mrs. Ogi.

"I just want to quote a dozen lines," pleads her husband. "This shows you what happens to literature, when it becomes 'the rage' among fine ladies: 'We learn thereby, every day, the latest gallantries, and the prettiest novelties in prose and verse; we are told just in the nick of time, that such a one has composed the prettiest piece in the world on such a subject; that some one else has written words to such an air; that this person has made a madrigal upon an enjoyment, and that his friend has composed some stanzas upon an infidelity; that Mr. So-and-so sent half a dozen verses yesterday evening to Miss Such-and-such, and that she sent back an answer at eight o'clock this morning; that one celebrated author has just sketched a plan for a new book, that another has got to the third part of his romance, and that a third is passing his works through the press.'"

"Is that in 'The Metropolis'?" asks Mrs. Ogi, suspiciously.

Whereat, her husband grins with malice. "Look for it; and if you don't find it, try the tenth scene of 'Les Précieuses Ridicules.'"

It was insolence for a mere tradesman's son to make fun of high-born ladies, and the ladies were furious, and succeeded in keeping the play off the stage for five days. That was the beginning of a fight, which lasted the rest of Molière's life. At any time he chose to write a silly farce or a ballet he could have it produced safely and with applause; but whenever he wrote a play with a serious purpose he raised up a swarm of enemies, who kept his play off the boards anywhere from five days to five years. And here is where the man showed his spirit; he was sick, he was always struggling with debt, he had his theatrical company to look out for—people whom he loved and whose burdens he carried. Nevertheless, truth blazed in him like a white-hot flame, and he could not let his enemies alone. He would quit the fight for a year or two, then come back to it with a piece of ridicule yet more stinging, or a picture of cruelty and falsehood so grim that it was hard to pass off for a comedy.

Molière hated hypocrisy with a deadly hatred; he hated the church of his time, because it was an organized system of hypocrisy for cash. He hated vain fops, and empty-headed, pretentious women, and the snobbish and self-seeking great ones of the earth. Also he hated the enslaving and imprisoning of love. In his time the French girl was raised in a convent, and when she was somewhere between thirteen and eighteen her parents, with the aid of the family lawyer, sold her in marriage to some mature man of the world, who possessed rank and fortune, and was apt to possess vices and diseases. In no less than nine of Molière's plays there is such a situation; also there is an amiable young man in love with the girl, and the couple find a way to thwart the schemes of their elders. The plays thus become a plea for common sense and human feeling, as opposed to avarice and worldly pride. This has become a familiar theme of comedy; the poet's first instinctive revolt against the money-power.

It is Molière's custom to take some propaganda theme, and to construct upon it a sermon in picture form. He chooses very simple characters to illustrate the theme, and in the conversations he pounds upon it like a man driving in a spike with a sledge. Every bit of knowledge and skill he possesses goes into those hard strokes; all his wit and verve, his insight into human character, his amazing vividness, his palpitating sense of life.

The greatest evil of the time was unquestionably the church, which controlled the mind and conscience of the nation and repressed all independent thinking. The life of France was beset by a horde of spies, the secret agents of a predatory power, the Jesuits; nothing could be hid from them, because they controlled the salvation of souls, and through the instrument of the confessional were able to dominate political and social life. They worked, as always, upon the ignorance and emotionalism of women; they beset the mind of the king, and in the end they got him, forcing the revocation of the law tolerating Protestants, and beginning another monstrous persecution. Molière saw all that going on around him, and he wrote about it one of the most terrible plays in the world. It is called "Tartuffe, or The Hypocrite," and shows a religious intriguer, worming his way into a middle-class family and seducing the wife of his benefactor. The drama

is an utterance of blazing anger, a veritable harpooning of hypocrisy. As a weapon of propaganda it is exactly as powerful today as it was three hundred years ago.

Of course it raised a storm in the little world of Paris and Versailles. The clerical party besieged the king, and the play was barred from public performance, though it was shown privately to some of the great nobles. The archbishop threatened to excommunicate those who even read the play, and Bossuet, the ruling-class literary pope of the time, took Molière's untimely death from tuberculosis as a divine judgment upon him for the writing of this infamous work. Two years later the king again permitted the play to be shown; but when the performance came on he was away at one of his wars, and an official closed the theater, and Molière's appeals to the king were in vain. For five years the fight over this play went on, before at last it could be freely shown.

They were years of incessant struggle for Molière. He produced "Don Juan," and the clerical critics objected to that also, because it portrayed an intellectual and free thinker. To be sure, it portrayed him as a very immoral man; but that did not satisfy the clerical party, for few of them could meet that test. It was the irony of fate that the archbishop, who forbade to Molière's body a church service, was himself a man of notoriously vile habits.

Then came a play called "The Misanthrope," a name doubtless given as a sop to Molière's critics. There is really nothing misanthropic about the hero; he is simply a man of fine ideals, who is stunned by his discovery of the powers of evil in the world about him, and their ability to destroy human life. He is married to a woman whom he loves, but who will not give up this evil world, and gives up her husband instead. Molière himself had made a bitterly unhappy marriage with a young actress who preferred the world to her husband, and the hero of this play is generally taken as Molière's own voice, just as Hamlet is taken as Shakespeare's voice.

This greatest comic dramatist of France had to waste much of his time producing farces and ballets for his exacting king. He now wrote a farce comedy, which I suppose is produced a thousand times every year in American high schools, "The Bourgeois Gentleman." The play makes merry with a crude, newly-rich merchant who tries

to acquire a little culture in his prosperous years. Molière was thus catering to high-born snobbery, and also voicing the dislike which all artists feel for those who buy and sell. You will recall the scorn of Aristophanes for "mongers" of all sorts—"mutton-mongers" and "rope-mongers" and "leather-mongers" and "offal-mongers."

In another play, "The Learned Ladies," Molière joins Aristophanes in poking fun at the idea that women should or could be educated. It is true that the vanities of women are especially absurd when applied to scientific matters, in which personality is so entirely out of place; but the same absurdities result from the first efforts of any disinherited group or class or race to lift itself. We have seen Shakespeare making fun of workingmen trying to produce a play; similarly, we shall find Kipling ridiculing the notion that Hindoos can master the English language, and become fit to hold government positions in their own country.

Molière's last whack was at the doctors, whom he especially disliked. We can understand that a man afflicted with a chronic disease, concerning which the doctors of his time understood nothing, must have had unsatisfactory results from their visits, must have submitted to their purgings and their bleedings to no purpose, and paid them money which he felt they did not earn. Anyhow, he goes after them again and again, and in his "Imaginary Invalid" he portrays a man who thinks he is sick, and all the various quacks who swarm around him. Three times the play was given with great success, with Molière acting the leading part. A fourth performance was due, and the poor playwright was ill; he thought of his company and what would happen to them if he were to shut down, so he went through the performance, and collapsed and died a few hours later.

But his vivid and courageous propaganda did not die. It lives, even to our time, as the greatest glory of the French drama; proving over and over again our thesis that really great art has never been produced except by men who wished to improve their fellow-men and to abolish cruelty and greed and falsehood from the earth.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### ÉCRASEZ L'INFAME

In his later years the "grand monarch" fell under the spell of a priest-ridden woman, made her his queen, and turned over his court to Jesuit intrigue. The law tolerating Protestants was repealed, the best schools in France were closed, and half a million of the most intelligent people were driven from the country. At the same time wars of conquest were undertaken, and a series of military disasters befell. The king's reign closed in darkness and despair, and the crowds of Paris mocked his funeral pageant. But the people's wrath had to fester for seventy years longer before it broke the tyranny of this "ancient regime."

Two years after the "grand monarch's" death, the regent sent to the Bastille a young French poet and man of fashion, the son of a wealthy lawyer of Paris. This youth, known to us as Voltaire, was accused of having written a pamphlet ridiculing absolutist ideas; the charge happened to be false, but needless to say, a year spent in prison without redress did not increase the young man's love for absolutism. He was one of the wittiest mortals ever born on earth, and blessed, or cursed, with an incessantly active mind. His jailers were comparatively civilized—I mean, compared with jailers of capitalist absolutism in America; they permitted the young man to write poetry and dramas, and when he came out he continued the gay and dissolute life of a literary fop of that period. He was welcomed in the salons of the great, and his long epic poems and his rhymed verse tragedies were produced with great success.

But in his pride as a man of letters Voltaire forgot his place in the great world of France; he presumed to resent an insult from a noble gentleman, whereupon this gentleman brought his lackeys, armed with sticks, and had the poet cruelly beaten, while the noble gentleman sat in his sedan-chair, jeering and directing the punishment. To the amazement of the French aristocracy, the victim failed to accept this as a proper form of discipline; he, a mere lawyer's son, proceeded to train himself to fight a duel with the nobleman—whereupon his great friends turned

their backs on him, and he was again thrown into the Bastille, and got out only upon promise to leave France.

He went to England, where he lived for three years. It was a new England, based upon the revolution which had driven out the Stuarts; a Protestant England, prosperous, busy, and from the point of view of a French refugee, amazingly free; an England in which Pope was preaching common sense, and Swift was lashing hypocrisy, and Newton was discovering the laws of the universe. When Voltaire returned to France, it was no longer to be a society fop and darling of the aristocracy; it was to be an intellectual pioneer, undermining the wall which French absolutism had built about the country.

Voltaire wrote a book dealing with the things he had learned in England, all the ideas of the new science and the new philosophy and the new toleration. Refused permission to publish it, he had it published secretly, whereupon it was solemnly banned by authority, and a copy was burned by the hangman. This made the fortune of the book; it had a big circulation, and all intellectual France fell to arguing about it. And that was to be Voltaire's life for some forty-five years thereafter; writing forbidden books and pamphlets under an infinity of pen names, having them secretly printed in England, or in Holland, or in Switzerland, having them publicly burned, and no less publicly debated.

The name Voltaire thus means to us a champion of free thought against religious superstition; but we must get clear the fact that during his life Voltaire was the most eminent poet and dramatist of France. Also it is interesting to note that, revolutionary as he was in the field of philosophy, he was a complete conservative in the field of art; following the models of Corneille and Racine, and respecting the sacred unities, the artificial laws whereby the French stage was fettered. Among the discoveries he had made in England was a playwright by the name of Shakespeare, whom he described as "a drunken savage, without the smallest scrap of good taste, and without the least acquaintance with the rules." Voltaire was much annoyed when this dictum had the effect of causing some Frenchmen to be curious about Shakespeare! As time passed, he found that he had to give more and more energy

to denouncing this "drunken savage," and rebuking those who professed to find merit in his work.

All of which has a vital lesson for us; it shows us how tight is the grip of culture conventions upon the educated mind. It is possible for men to think for themselves concerning God and immortality, concerning the divine right of emperors and kings, and even of oil magnates and international financiers. But it is extremely difficult for them to think freely on the subject of what constitutes good taste, and whether or not they ought to permit themselves to enjoy a new and strange work of art. I note with interest that our own young intellectuals, who count themselves thorough-going revolters, who boast of unorthodoxy in religion, politics, economics, and morals, are usually of Tory inclination in matters of culture; cherishing the aristocratic superstition that art exists for cultured classes, and that whatever is popular is obviously contemptible.

We in America do not make any fuss about poets, so it is hard for us to understand the power which Voltaire wielded over French society. He was cynical, he was obscene, he was jealous and vain and exasperating; but he was a kind of god, to whom critical authority bowed, even monarchs with their worldly power. He produced a score of dramas, most of them tragedies in the heroic style, and with few exceptions each was a separate ovation, a coronation in the kingdom of letters. It never occurred to anyone in Voltaire's time that he was not the equal of Racine, as a dramatist; while his epics were put above Homer and Virgil. We today begin one of his plays with determination to go through to the end, but we cannot make it; we desire some Greenwich Village wit to produce it in mock heroic style, so that we can laugh heartily at these pompous aristocrats raging and storming, stabbing and killing each other. We laugh, because it is so apparent that the poet himself has never felt any of this emotion, he has thought only how magnificent it sounds.

But at this time French culture was supreme throughout Europe, and Voltaire, cynic and skeptic, was at once the idol and the terror of the courts. He was a good business man, and invested the money he made from his plays, and become enormously rich. He purchased an estate in Switzerland, just over the French border; an admirable

strategic location, a sort of literary emplacement for a high-caliber gun. He could have his pamphlets printed in Germany and Holland, and secretly shipped into France, and the French police were powerless to touch him. The Swiss Calvinists were glad to have attacks made upon French and Catholic absolutism, so they let the poet alone.

Voltaire was a frail ghost of a man, almost a skeleton, but with quick bright eyes in his bare skull. He was ill most of his life; when he visited King Frederick he described himself as suffering from four mortal diseases, yet he lived to the age of eighty-four, and worked under terrific pressure all the time. He carried on an enormous correspondence—more than ten thousand of his letters have been edited and published. He was capable of almost every kind of meanness and malice, but he was also capable of heroic and unselfish idealism, as the world was now to see.

In the city of Toulouse, in southern France, a young man named Calas committed suicide, as result of religious mania; he was a member of a Protestant family, and the Catholic authorities in Toulouse accused the father of having murdered the boy to keep him from turning Catholic. They had no shred of evidence, but they cruelly tortured the old man, and finally executed him, and confiscated the property of the family. Voltaire took up the case in a frenzy of indignation; he employed investigators and lawyers, he wrote pamphlets and circulated them, he wrote innumerable letters and appeals; for three years he devoted his time to making the case a political and religious issue in France. No man could have displayed nobler public spirit, or more genuine human sympathy; for three years, so he wrote, he never smiled without feeling that he had committed a crime. When at last the verdict of the Toulouse courts was reversed, he fell into the arms of one of the Calas lads, and wept like a child. He said—he, the veteran playwright: "This is the most splendid fifth act I have ever seen on any stage!"

There came one such case after another. Just as in Russia the Black Hundreds spread the rumor that the Jews were accustomed to shed the blood of Christian children, so this Catholic machine made war on the Protestants by accusing them of hideous crimes. Voltaire

espoused the "Sirven case" in the same fury of indignation; it had taken the courts two hours to condemn the victims, he said, and nine years to do them justice! Out of his agony of protest came one of his greatest works, the "Treatise on Toleration"—burned by the hangman, like everything else. Also there came his immortal slogan, which he took to putting on all his letters: "Écrasez l'infame"—that is, crush the infamous thing, meaning Catholic absolutism.

Now America also has its "infame," which is capitalist absolutism; and we await the arrival of some man of letters, capable of the heroic and unselfish idealism of Voltaire. To him there were brought ten or a dozen cases of cruelty and torture in the course of twenty years; but hardly a month passes that my mail does not contain a story of cruelty and torture equally hideous, committed by the powers which are now destroying liberty and enlightenment in America. Consider, for example, the case of the Centralia prisoners, a story of brutality, torture, murder, terrorism, and the subornation of the law by the lumber barons of the Northwest; a story just as pitiful, just as revolting, just as worthy of Voltaire's immortal slogan.

"If you are not careful," says Mrs. Ogi, "you will be accused of putting propaganda into this chapter!"

It was as the champion of freedom of thought that Voltaire stood before the French people; he, with his wealth and fame, was able to do what they did not dare to do. From his mountain retreat he sent his ideas all over Europe; and meantime the blind, deluded rulers of France did all they could to plow the soil for his sowing. The great-grandson of the "grand monarch," who ascended the throne as a child in 1715, ruled for almost sixty years. Beginning with the name of "the well-beloved," he squandered the revenues of the state upon his mistresses, and led his country to a series of disasters, including the loss of the American colonies and India. He left the nation bankrupt, and died with the famous phrase, "After us the deluge."

Four years later, the old Voltaire, made bold by all his honors, came down from his mountain fortress and entered Paris. He had a pageant like a conquering hero; his plays were produced to enormous audiences, and even

the Academy of Richelieu welcomed him—strange irony of history! It was like Tolstoi in Russia; the authorities would have liked to chop off his head, but they could only gnash their teeth in impotence. However, what their hatred could not do, the love of the people accomplished; Voltaire was literally killed by kindness, and died amid the excitements of this holiday. It is interesting to us to note that among those he met in Paris was Benjamin Franklin, fellow skeptic, scientist, and revolutionary propagandist from the new world. This was in 1778, two years after the Declaration of Independence, and less than ten years before the French revolution.

In the case of Voltaire we see a man of letters who ranks as one of the great world forces, and purely and simply because of his propaganda. If he had written nothing but heroic tragedies and sublime epics, he would be a forgotten name today; it was only because he took upon himself the task of setting free the mind of his country, and labored at it incessantly for the greater part of his life, that we know of him and honor him as one of the glories of France. Great as were his faults, no one can deny that he stood to all the world for the fundamental idea of freedom of thought.

## CHAPTER XLIV

## THE TRUMPETER OF REVOLUTION

We have seen that Voltaire was a Tory as to art; his revolution was of the intellect. There was needed a revolutionist of the feelings, and he appeared in the person of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a stormy, embittered, unhappy man, the object of endless controversy, continuing to our own day; a character full of contradictions, difficult to cover within the limits of a chapter.

His father was a watch-maker in Geneva; he ran away from home and became a vagabond, and remained that all his life. He never had any property; as for friends, he had them only for short periods, because he quarreled with everyone. Among the occupations he followed in youth was that of a footman, which ought to have barred him from rising in eighteenth century France. But he

wrote ballets, operas, comedies, and won an entrée to the salons of the great.

Here is another "pure" artist; and did you ever hear of him in that "pure" capacity? Did you know that Jean-Jacques had written ballets, operas and comedies? Could you name one of these works? Unless you are a specialist in literary history, you could not; and if Rousseau had followed that easy career, and kept his entrée to the Paris salons, you would never have heard his name. It was only when he became a propagandist that he earned world fame, and it is as a propagandist that we know him.

He was thirty-seven years old when Diderot, editor of the great "Encyclopedia," the Bible of the new learning in France, was put into prison for writing an atheistical pamphlet. Rousseau went to visit him and, while thus wrought up, he fell to thinking about the depraved state of society, and the causes thereof; he wrote an essay, and so was launched upon his career as maker of intellectual dynamite. He was pursued by the authorities, until he acquired a persecution complex; before he died he became convinced that everyone he knew was in a conspiracy to destroy him.

His first important book was "The Social Contract," a study of the state and its authority. What is the basis of sovereignty? What right has the state to command my obedience? The answer of Rousseau's time was that God had appointed a king to rule you, and if you disobeyed this king you were hanged, drawn and quartered, and later on roasted to eternity. Rousseau's thesis was that the basis of sovereignty is popular consent; the state is made by the general will, and lacking such sanction, no sovereignty exists. The opening words give the keynote of the book: "Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains." A study of history and anthropology convinces us that the first part of this statement is false; but that did not keep the words from becoming a revolutionary slogan.

The next important book was "The New Heloise," a love story written in the form of a series of letters. French women were rebelling against being sold in marriage; their natural desire to marry the man of their own choice was reaching a point dangerous to the old conven-

tion. To be sure, Heloise obeyed her parents and married according to their command; but her sufferings were so moving that she was more effective as an inspirer of revolt than if she had herself revolted.

Then came another novel, "Emile, or The Sentimental Education"—that is to say, an education according to the dictates of the natural feelings. The physical and moral soundness of the infant Emile were based upon the fact that his mother suckled him, instead of turning him over to a wet nurse, according to the fashion of the great world of France. The child was raised in close contact with nature, and followed the dictates of those natural desires, which Rousseau believed were always wholesome and trustworthy. The youth was taught to work and be useful instead of being a culture parasite; and in due course a pure and beautiful maiden appeared to deserve his love. Today Rousseau's ideas of education are freely applied in the Ferrer schools; but in 1762 "Emile" was condemned by the Sorbonne, and burned by the common executioner, and its author was forced to flee to Switzerland, and finally to England.

In his later years of desolation Rousseau produced the story of his life, known as the "Confessions." His other works are not easy for us to read, but the "Confessions" will be read so long as man is interested in his own heart. Here for the first time in the history of our race a man of first-rate genius told the full truth about himself. A great deal of it is painful truth; we read it with dismay, and on the basis of it Rousseau's enemies have condemned him to infamy.

But never forget, we know these painful things because Rousseau tells them to us; if he had concealed them, or dressed them up to look romantic, then we should have had quite a different Rousseau in our minds. Many authors have done that, and live enthroned in our regard. But this man says to us: much as I care about myself—and I care a great deal—I care still more about enabling my fellowmen to understand reality. And that is the spirit in which we take the "Confessions." We realize that we are not dealing with one of those feeble natures which first commit offenses, and then find pleasure in talking about them; we are sharing life with a deeply serious man, who seeks in agony a cure for human ills.

I doubt if there has ever been a preacher of doctrine who delivered himself more completely to his enemies than Jean-Jacques. He tells us how, not knowing how to get his bread, he left his newly born children in care of a foundling asylum. This was a custom of the time; but as a rule those who followed the custom did not go away and write a book advising other people how to rear and educate their children! For such inconsistencies his critics ridiculed him unmercifully. And yet, in spite of all they could say, he became the trumpeter of the revolution, political, economic, and cultural, which was on the way in France. He remains in our time a trumpeter of the social revolution which is happening before our eyes.

That does not mean that we are blind to the fallacies and absurdities in his doctrines. We of today study education in the light of a mass of psychological knowledge, we study government in the light of historical and economic knowledge, we study the human soul in the light of biology, sociology, chemistry, psychoanalysis—a host of sciences whose very names were unknown to Rousseau. But how do we come to possess this knowledge? We possess it because Jean-Jacques, with the divination of a prophet and the fervor of a moral genius, proclaimed from the housetops the right of the human spirit to be free, and to face the facts of life, and to choose its path in accordance with its own happiness and health.

With any critic of Rousseau there is one question to be settled at the outset. Why do you quarrel with this man? Is it because you wish to correct his errors, and clear the way to his goal of liberty, equality, and fraternity? Or are you one of those who dread the torrent of new ideas and new feelings which Rousseau let loose upon the world? Is it your purpose to discredit the whole individualistic movement which he fathered, and to take us back to the good old days when children obeyed their parents, and servants obeyed their masters, and women obeyed their husbands, and subjects obeyed their popes and kings, and students in colleges accepted without question what their professors told them?

Says Mrs. Ogi: "I suspect that last phrase is meant for Professor Babbitt."

"It is wonderful," says her husband, "that he should have that name. A judgment of Providence, without doubt!"

## CHAPTER XLV

### THE HARVARD MANNER

Let it be explained at the outset that we are setting out to discuss, not a character in a novel, but a living person, Irving Babbitt, professor of French literature in Harvard University; a scholar who has set himself one goal in life, to deliver America from the evil influence of Rousseau and "Rousseauism"—by which he means the whole modern cultural movement. He has published a stately volume, "Rousseau and Romanticism," three hundred and ninety-three pages, plus twenty-three pages of introduction, with an average of twelve quotations and citations per page, illustrating the follies, absurdities and monstrosities uttered or enacted by every man or woman who has at any time during the past hundred and seventy-five years ever thought a new thought, or tried an original experiment, or embodied an especially intense emotion in art form.

It makes a formidable catalogue. Because, you see, humanity proceeds by the method of trial and error; there is no other way to proceed. The pendulum of life swings to one extreme, and then it swings to the other. Every movement has its lunatic fringe, people who show us where to stop; and what our Harvard professor has done is to make a whole book of these extravagances and insanities. He takes the fringe for the movement; and so, of course, it is easy for him to prove that the human spirit ought never to have been set free; it was a violation of "decorum." That is his favorite word, to which he comes back in every chapter. The rest of America has another name for it; we call it "the Harvard manner."

"Of course," says Mrs. Ogi, "you have to do up a Harvard Tory—that is fore-ordained. But I recall the lunatics I have met in the radical movement—not merely the harmless cranks, but the dangerous and hateful beasts! What Rousseau means to me is that I used to hear his praises sung by a man who has lived for twenty

years by seducing young girls and getting their money."

Says Ogi: "If you are going to judge a wave by its scum, I shall have to make a study of the criminals of classicism: the horrors perpetrated by perfect gentlemen who respected the three unities, and wrote triolets, and wore exactly the right clothes. There will be a section in this volume devoted to Harvard University—see 'The Goose-Step,' pages 62 to 91."

Says Mrs. Ogi: "Come back to Rousseau, and explain to us why a college professor should take so much trouble to kill a man who died a hundred and fifty years ago."

"The professor does not know why Rousseau is still alive, but I can tell him—because Rousseau's revolution is only half completed. The political part happened, and gave us—world capitalism! We aren't satisfied, and we are gathering our muscles for another leap, and all the world's Tories are hanging to our coat-tails, trying to hold us back. They dig out all the old mummies from their coffins, and dress them up and paint them to look like life, and set them up to cry warnings to us. Even Voltaire's 'l'Infame'! There is a clerical party in every country in Europe, and Catholic trade unions, called 'Christian Socialist,' to cheat the workers. In the United States there are the Knights of Columbus, and Tammany Hall, and parades of priests and cardinals up Fifth Avenue, generously financed by Wall Street. And naturally, in such a crisis the three unities and the rest of the classical tradition are not overlooked; so here comes our learned professor with his stately volume, to prove to us that Rousseau did not have the Harvard manner. The very same conspiracy, you see, that Rousseau faced during his life."

"The persecution complex?" asks Mrs. Ogi.

"Don't fool yourself; Rousseau actually was persecuted! And see what evidence he would have, if he were alive today, and could investigate this Babbitt case! The House of Morgan, on the corner of Broad and Wall streets, just across the way from the United States Treasury building; and the billion dollars which this House of Morgan made buying war supplies for the Allies; and the thirty billion dollars which the United States Treasury paid out to save the House of Morgan's

French and British loans; and the Boston connections of the House of Morgan, Lee, Higginson & Company, with their network of banks and trust companies; and the Lee-Higginson and Morgan control of the governing bodies of Harvard University; and Harvard's answer to 'The Goose-Step,' the election of its distinguished graduate, Mr. J. P. Morgan, to its sacred band of overseers; and the Boston 'Transcript,' and the Harvard 'Lampoon,' and the Laski case, and the Sacco-Vanzetti case, and the Boston police strike, and Cal Coolidge, the queer prank that fate played on Boston's aristocracy. Picture the situation in the year 1919, the days of Attorney-General Palmer; the Harvard mob smashing that police strike, and the hundred per cent patriotic plutocrats of Boston raiding the offices of the 'Reds,' and cracking the skulls of everybody they found there—"

"The Harvard manner?" says Mrs. Ogi.

"Throwing them into jail, or packing them by hundreds into rooms in office buildings without toilets, and shipping them back to Europe where they came from. And right in the midst of that campaign, in that same anno mirabile of 1919, comes our Babbitt professor—I mean our Professor Babbitt—with a schoolmaster's ferule in one hand and a slung-shot in the other, scolding and at the same time committing mayhem upon every artist who in the past hundred and seventy-five years of history has ever had a human feeling. It is supposed to be a work of scholarship, of literary criticism; it is written to teach 'decorum'—by such examples as this: 'The humanitarian, all adrip with brotherhood, and profoundly convinced of the loveliness of his own soul.' And again: 'Both Rousseau and his disciple Robespierre were reformers in the modern sense—that is they are concerned not with reforming themselves, but other men.' What is one going to do with a man like that?"

"What did they do with them in the French revolution?" asks Mrs. Ogi.

"Les aristocrats à la lanterne!" says her husband.

"I've forgotten all my French," says Mrs. Ogi, "and so will most of your readers. But I'll tell you this—the professor sounds exactly like you, except that he's on the other side!"

## CHAPTER XLVI

### THE POISONED RAT

While France has been moving toward its revolution, England has been moving away from hers, and we now return to the foggy island to watch the course of events through this eighteenth century. The crown has submitted, and parliament has the last word in public affairs. A parliament of the land-owning gentry, elected by corruption, we shall see it in the course of two centuries being gradually changed into a parliament of merchants and ship-owners, of steel and coal and diamond and gold magnates, of brewers and publishers of capitalist propaganda.

It was the task of eighteenth century England to create the bourgeois soul. Machinery and standardized production, which were to make over the world, had not yet appeared, but when they came, they found their psychology and culture all prepared for them by this "nation of shop-keepers." It is a world of money, all other powers deposed, all other standards a shell without life inside; honor, favor, virtue are represented by money. Religion has become an affair of "livings" and of "benefices." Politics has become an affair of party rancor, a squabble over the spoils of office. The difference between the two parties is that one is in and the other is out; the purpose of the outs being to prove rascality against the ins, and thus get a chance to do what the ins are doing.

In this bourgeois world the artist may be feeble of mind, not knowing the reality of his time, believing sincerely in its shams. Or he may be a cynic, jeering at his time, but taking what he can get. Or he may be a rebel, speaking the truth—in which case he will starve in a garret, or go insane, or be thrown into prison, or driven into exile.

The first to greet this new century with his writings was a man who went insane. One of the great masters of English prose, his fate in life was to be brought up as a "poor relation," and to eat the bitter bread of dependence. He became a kind of educated servant to the wealthy, and finally got a small job in the church. Ill

most of his life, proud, imperious, burning up with thwarted genius, Jonathan Swift was made into a master ironist.

His first great book was "The Tale of a Tub," in which he ridiculed the squabbles of the various church parties. Having thus shocked the church, he applied to be a dean, but did not get the job, because somebody else paid a thousand pound bribe to the official having the appointment. Swift was told that he could have another deanery at the same price, but he did not have the sum handy.

The "ins" of those days were called Tories, and the "outs" were called Whigs; they fought furiously, and literary rats, hiding in garrets and cellars, wrote pamphlets of personal abuse, which were published anonymously and circulated in the face of jail penalties. Like the laureate Dryden, our would-be dean did this vile writing; he did it for the Whigs, and when he got no preferment there, he joined the Tories, and was made dean of the cathedral in Dublin. There he wrote his "Modest Proposal" for eating the children of Ireland, one of the most terrific pieces of irony in all literature. "Look," says the 'gloomy dean,' "we are letting a population starve to death, and what a waste of national resources, what a violation of our fundamental principles of business economy. Let us feed these Irish babies, and when they are nice and fat, serve them on our tables; they will be happy during their brief span of life, and we shall no longer have to import food from foreign parts."

Then came "Gulliver's Travels," which took its place along with "Pilgrim's Progress" as required reading for children and adults. It is an even more perfect allegory; you can read it as a story pure and simple, without any idea of an ulterior meaning. The author helps you by the perfect gravity with which he describes every detail of these singular adventures. First we visit the land in which the people are only six inches tall, and so we laugh at the pettiness of human affairs. Then we visit the land where they are correspondingly big, and we learn how brutal and gross and stupid we really are. So on, until we come to the land of noble and beautiful horses, in which human beings are lewd and filthy apes. So we learn the worst possible about a world which appointed a man of genius to be dean of St. Patrick's

in Dublin, when he wanted to be dean of St. Paul's in London. So we are ready to go insane, and to die, as the dean himself phrased it, "like a poisoned rat in a hole."

## CHAPTER XLVII

### VIRTUE REWARDED

Prose fiction up to this time had dealt for the most part with men; its most popular variety was the "picaresque," telling the adventures of vagabonds and rascals. But now in this bourgeois England the fiction writer settles down, and becomes respectable, and discovers the theme which is to occupy him for the next two hundred years—the feminine heart, and what goes on in it during the mating season.

Watch the gentleman-turkey, stirred by erotic excitement; he struts up and down, swells out his comb, spreads his feathers, scrapes the ground with his stiff wings. And there stands the humble and retiring lady-turkey, observing him with modest but attentive eye; she takes a step or two away, but does not run far. What is going on in her mind? What does she think of the blood-flushed comb and the spread feathers, the heroic pose and the awe-inspiring gobble? We are not permitted to enter into the psychology of a lady-turkey; but through the magic of fiction we are permitted to watch the mind of the lady-human, and note every detail of the process whereby she gets her mate. We share her emotions, we analyze the devices she employs—and thus, if we belong to her sex, we perfect our technique, or, if we belong to the male sex, we learn how to write novels.

In this bourgeois world, the emotions of mating are dominated by those of money. Society has become settled, property relations are fixed, and you live a routine life, without great change or adventure—except once, which is at this mating period. Here is your great chance to rise above your own class in a world of money classification. A beautiful and charming maiden may catch the eye of some wealthy man; a handsome, dashing youth may stumble upon an heiress. Such is the significance of the heavenly smiles and the coy glances of

bourgeois romance. Cupid travels about, armed with a golden arrow, and in the love-glints from the eyes of youth and beauty we see fortunes flying to and fro—diamonds and rubies, manor-houses, estates, orders and offices, titles to nobility. And always in the background sit the chaperons, keeping watch—old women, whose function it is to know the grim facts of greed, and to pass on such "worldly wisdom" to the young.

The first old woman to take up this task in English fiction was Samuel Richardson. He himself was a hero for any bourgeois novel—a printer who had married his master's daughter, and become publisher to the king. He knew what money costs, and believed in it with all his heart and soul; in his mature years he set out to warn young women of the value of their virtue, and point out to them the importance of a life contract in love. He wrote a novel called "Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded," telling the story of an innocent fifteen-year-old servant girl in the household of a great gentleman who makes love to her. In a series of letters to her parents she exposes to us the details of this love-making, and all her bewilderments, agonies and fears.

Pamela Andrews is the very soul of humility; but young as she is, she knows the business facts concerning the life contract—"with all my worldly goods I thee endow." She knows that her master is a rake and scoundrel—he gives her in the course of the story all possible evidence of that; nevertheless, she stands firm, and in the end her virtue is rewarded—by marriage with this rake and scoundrel. If that seems to you a strange reward of virtue, it will be only because you do not understand this eighteenth century world. What a man is personally counts for little compared with the class he belongs to. He is a gentleman, he owns houses and lands, and Pamela's children will be ladies and gentlemen, and will own houses and lands. This novel became the sensation of the day, not merely in England, but all over Europe. There were two large volumes, and a sequel with two more, but no one was bored; great ladies sat up half the night, weeping their eyes red over Pamela's trials, and welcoming her—in imagination—into the class of ladies. The writers learned how to make money, and a new profession, that of the love-describers, came into being.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### THE GOOD FELLOW'S CODE

You will note in this bourgeois world two attitudes toward money; one might be described as the attitude of the first generation, and the other of the third. The first generation has had to make the money, and knows what money costs. The third generation wants the money just as much, but its knowledge is confined to what money will buy. There is war between these two generations, and you find it reflected in the arts; the young and saucy artists make propaganda for one side, while the mature and sober artists make it for the other.

There was in England at this time a gentleman whose ancestors had had money for a long time, and who took toward it the attitude of jolly good heartedness. He read this story of "Pamela," and it filled him with fury; what a loathsome world, in which men and women spent their time poring over cash-books and calling it virtue! What would be left in life if a fashionable young gentleman could not have fun with a lower class girl without tying himself to her for life! So Henry Fielding, gentleman, barrister, and man of pleasure in London, sat himself down to turn "Pamela" into screaming farce. He took Pamela's brother, a young footman, and pictured him in the household of a great lady who endeavored to lure him from the path of virtue. The agonies of temptation of Joseph Andrews reproduced those of his sister; but as young men were not supposed to have any virtue, the tragedy was turned upside down.

This story is usually cited by the critics as an illustration of how a man of genius began a piece of propaganda, and then got interested in his story, and turned it into a real work of art. I should alter the formula by saying that he changed from a negative to a positive kind of propaganda. Joseph Andrews runs away from his wicked mistress, taking a girl he truly loves, and the narrative turns from a satire on Richardson's pseudo-virtues into a portrayal of what Fielding considers real virtue. Joseph and his girl fall into trouble, and their creator, in pleading their cause, defends the poor and friendless all over England, who do not get justice in the courts. Fielding knew,

because he had ridden the circuits; being a warm-hearted man, he created a model English magistrate by the name of Squire Allworthy—an obvious enough name—to show how the law ought to be administered.

Fielding next took to writing plays. But he ventured to make satiric allusions to "persons of quality"; therefore he ran afoul of the Lord Chamberlain, and one of his plays was banned. He was disgusted, and rather than conform, he gave up play-writing. There was no government big-wig overseeing fiction; and so this new art form was destined to become the vehicle of social criticism.

In his next book this gentleman-novelist went on to write a deadly piece of satire. Looking out over Europe, he saw Frederick, king of Prussia, called "the great," making a raid upon Silesia and seizing it; he saw other royal and imperial conquerors tormenting mankind with war. He took a notorious criminal, who had recently been hanged in London, and made him the hero of a novel, which parodied in detail the glory-career of a king. "Jonathan Wild the Great," like all works of revolutionary tendency, has received from the critics small part of its due praise. There are few scenes more grim than the conclusion of the book, the satire upon the "consolations of religion" when the arch-criminal dies.

Then came "Tom Jones," one of the greatest of English novels. Fielding's purpose in this story, as he declared it, was "to recommend Goodness and Innocence." In his hero he set out to show the truth about a man; not a snuffling saint for a church-window, but a real, hearty good fellow, according to Fielding's notion. What may such a young fellow do, and what may he not do? May he drink? Of course. May he spend money freely? Fielding knew about that, having married a rich wife and run through her fortune. May he take money from his friends? Yes, even ask for it. May he take money from his mistresses? And here suddenly you see the gentleman-author start up in anger. He may not! Here is an iron-clad rule, which English gentlemen enforce without compromise. But then, may he cohabit with girls of classes below his own? Yes, says Fielding, certainly he may, and he will; let's be honest, and not fool ourselves with shams. Thackeray, who was loud in admiration of

"Tom Jones," lamented that no novelist since then had dared to tell the truth about a man. In our day, for better or worse, the novelists have dared, and reticence as a literary virtue is dead.

In conclusion, we note the fact that Fielding died at the age of forty-three, "of dropsy, jaundice, and asthma." So it appears that you may take your choice; you may exercise self-restraint, and be accused of hypocrisy, and of spoiling your friends' pleasure; or you may throw the reins upon the neck of desire, and go through life at a gallop—and have your body give out just when your brain is ready for its best work.

## CHAPTER XLIX

### THE GAUGER OF GENIUS

We have read about an English gentleman-novelist who wasted his health and died at the age of forty-three; and we next have to hear the story of a Scotch plowman-poet who treated himself in the same way and died at the age of thirty-seven. Such men present a painful problem to their friends, and also to their critics—since in art circles it is not considered good form to set up moral standards. However, in this case Robert Burns has solved the problem for us; he lacked nothing in clearness of insight or plainness of speech concerning his own follies, and spoke of his "self-contempt bitterer to drink than blood."

He was one of seven children of a peasant family, and was born on a stormy January day, in a clay cottage of which the roof was blown off a few days later. He followed the plow-tail all his early years, and wrote that his life until sixteen was "the toil of a slave." The few books they could borrow the children would read at meal times, or snatching a few words in the fields. Such peasant slaves are not supposed to acquire culture, and if they do so, it is at the cost of health of mind and body. Robert Burns was given to fits of melancholy, and to moods of wild excess; he speaks of his "passions raging like demons." He was a headstrong, impatient youth, disgusted by the falsities and shams of conventional religion.

He had to find his own code in life, and the fact that he found it too late to save himself is our loss.

This peasant, toiling on a rocky tenant farm, discovered in himself the gift of exquisite melody. His feelings poured themselves out in verses in the homely Scotch dialect, then considered a barbarous thing, unworthy of literature. He would compose these verses all day long while guiding the plow, and then, coming home at night, he would sit in a garret room and write them out. Not until he was twenty-seven years old did he succeed in having them published. They appeared at a time when the family was ruined, and the poet himself being pursued by officers of the law, at the instance of the father of a girl he loved. The twenty pounds which he got from this first volume saved his life, so he declared.

He leaped into fame all over Scotland, and spent a year in Edinburgh, where he was fêted by the great. But he did not keep their favor, because he persisted in intimacy with his humble friends, and also, alas! with the taverns. He went back to the plow, more set than ever in his bitterness against the world of privilege and rank. It was a time when the great world was in the habit of pensioning its poets, but the Tories controlled in Scotland, and "Bobbie" Burns was a Whig, and turned into a Republican, the same thing as a Bolshevik today. The best that lovers of his poetry could get him was a job as a gauger of liquor barrels, at the princely salary of sixty pounds a years.

Even that he had difficulty in holding; because the French revolution came sweeping over Europe, and frightened the governing class of England into just such a frenzy of reaction as we in America witnessed in 1919. In his capacity as exciseman Burns captured a smuggling ship with four cannon; he purchased the cannon at auction, and sent them to the French Legislative Assembly as a mark of sympathy. Imagine, if you can, an American customs officer in 1919 shipping four machine-guns to the Soviet government of Russia, and you may realize how close the poet came to losing the salary upon which his wife and children had to exist.

We shall see other poets shrinking in horror from the execution of King Louis, and throwing in their lot with reaction. But here is one who stood by the down-trodden

of the earth, and voiced their feelings to the end. Not merely is he the national poet of Scotland; he is, in spite of the handicap of dialect, the voice of the peasant and the land-slave throughout the English-speaking world. When he writes "the rank is but the guinea's stamp," he is the voice of the labor movement in England and of democracy in America. His work is beloved by humble people; you would be surprised to know how widely it is read—perhaps more widely than any other poetry among the poor.

The people know this voice, they know this heart, with all its loves and hates, its longings and griefs. There is no man who has come from the toiling masses, self-taught and self-made, who has expressed their feelings so completely. And note that he has, not merely beauty and passion, but keen insight and power of brain; he can think for his people, as well as feel with them. He is not a bit afraid to use his art to preach and to scold, to discuss moral problems, to storm at social injustice and to ridicule church dogma.

What though such a man did drink and squander himself; that also is a part of the worker's tragedy. He paid for it the price which the workers pay, and life spared him no part of the suffering and shame, nor did he spare himself the remorse. He wrote his own epitaph, in which he spoke of himself as "the poor inhabitant below," and recorded that "thoughtless folly laid him low and stained his name." Because there is no spiritual value greater than honesty, the judgment of his people has raised him high and crowned his name with immortality.

## CHAPTER L

### THE BRAIN PROPRIETOR

"Why do you call this a work on art," says Mrs. Ogi, "when you are dealing entirely with literature?"

"All the arts are one," says her husband. "They are expressions of the human spirit, and the material they use is comparatively unimportant. We realize this when we see an artist like Michelangelo using blocks of marble and molecules of paint and printed words, and giving us with each medium the record of the same personality. There

have been others who used the acted drama and the lyric, like Shakespeare; or words and music—"

"Let us see how your thesis works out with music," says Mrs. Ogi.

Up to the end of the eighteenth century music has been either an adjunct of religious propaganda, or else a leisure-class plaything and decoration. The musicians are commanded to come and entertain their lords and masters, while the latter feast and dance and gossip. The musician as an artist, a lover of beauty for its own sake, exists at his own peril. For example, Mozart; at the age of six he was a child prodigy, exhibited as a curiosity before all the crowned heads of Europe; but he grew up to a life of slow starvation, and a death from tuberculosis at the age of thirty-five. The sum total of his earnings from seven hundred and sixty-nine compositions was not enough to keep his small family alive.

But now comes a mighty genius, who discovers how to make music an art of power, an expression of the deepest experiences of the human soul. Beethoven was born in 1770, his mother being a cook and his father a broken-down musician drinking himself to death. Beethoven became the child slave of this drunkard; he was driven by beatings to practice the piano at the age of four, and at the age of seven had a job in a theater orchestra. I wonder, when we go to the "movies" and listen to the banging and scraping, may there be among those servants of imbecility some lad who is destined to raise the art of music to a new height, and to die in misery for his pains?

Beethoven went to Vienna to earn his living as entertainer to the dilettante aristocracy of that pleasure-loving city. He was eccentric, self-absorbed, possessed by his visions, never happy except when he was composing, or out in the country where he could give free rein to his delight in nature. It was his fate to teach music to the children of the rich, and to play for grown-up rich children in their salons. They were accustomed to chatter while men of genius attempted to entertain them; but Beethoven thought his playing was of importance, and when they failed to keep silence he struck his fist upon the piano keys, and sprang up, exclaiming: "I will not play for such swine!"

A terrible calamity befell him, the worst that a

musician could imagine—he began to grow deaf. At the age of thirty he could no longer hear a musical note. That seemed the ruin of his life; his enemies jeered, saying that he poured out his preposterous compositions because he did not know how horrible they sounded. Also Beethoven suffered from near-sightedness, caused by smallpox in childhood. His health at times gave way entirely, and he contemplated suicide. "My art alone deterred me," he wrote.

He was, like Milton, a Puritan, though he did not use the word. He had an ideal of love, and did not squander himself in casual intrigues. His profession brought him into intimacy with the ladies of the great world; they would be overwhelmed by his genius, but then they would think it over, and realize what it would mean to marry a social inferior—and a deaf one at that. One brilliant young lady tortured the great man's heart, and then went off and married a count. So Beethoven withdrew into himself, becoming more eccentric, more irritable, and more passionate and terrifying in his compositions. Said Weber when he heard the Third Symphony: "Beethoven is now quite mad."

The composer's life was one long struggle with poverty and debt. There were wealthy noblemen in Vienna who appreciated his genius, and wanted him to stay and play for them; they subscribed an income for him, but then forgot to pay it, and left him to struggle along. To be sure, he was none too easy with his patrons; he went to stay with one, and the good man persisted in taking off his hat every time he laid eyes on Beethoven. The composer, who abhorred ceremony, ran away.

Beethoven was a reader of Plutarch, and held the ideals of the old Roman republic; he believed in universal suffrage, and in liberty, and had no hesitation in voicing his convictions to anyone. He hailed Napoleon as a defender of liberty, and dedicated his "Eroica" symphony to him. Later on, when Napoleon accepted a crown, Beethoven changed this dedication, "To the *memory* of a great man." He dedicated another symphony to a French general, the conqueror of the Bastille; and you can imagine how reactionary Vienna welcomed that.

After the defeat of Napoleon, the monarchs entered into what they called the "Holy Alliance," to rivet Cath-

olic absolutism upon the continent forever. Vienna became the center of world reaction, and dungeon and torture were the fate of men who raised their voices for human rights. Here was Beethoven, old, deaf, and poverty-stricken; but he never yielded an inch of his principles. 'Words are bound in chains," he said, "but sounds are still free." He poured his feelings into his wonderful Ninth Symphony, which occasioned such a tornado of applause that the police considered it necessary to interfere.

Here, you see, was no maker of pretty sounds for the entertainment of the rich; here was a great mind, one who read and thought for himself, and understood not merely dancing and mating, but the nature of organized society. In a time of universal subservience and fawning he clenched his hands and behaved like a democrat. When his brother, full of the pride of a newly rich bourgeois, presented him with a card inscribed, "Johann van Beethoven, Land Proprietor," the composer scrawled under it, "Ludwig van Beethoven, Brain Proprietor."

There is a story of his meeting with the poet Goethe. As we shall see, Goethe had made his way by conforming to the customs of a court; he was now sixty-three years of age, stiff to the rest of the world, but pliable to the nobility. Beethoven was forty-two, willing to be humble to a poet of genius, but not to rank and arrogance. They met in the open air, in a park where there were many people; and suddenly came word that the duke and the empress were coming. The people formed two lines, and stood, hats in hand, to do homage; and Goethe took his place among them. Beethoven was furious; he remonstrated with the poet in vain, then he jammed his hat down over his head and strode toward the duke and empress, and they were the ones who did homage to him. Goethe never forgot this scene, and he did not care to listen to Beethoven's music, because he said he found it "disturbing."

We are told by our "art for art's sake" dilettanti that art has nothing to do with moral questions. Let them take their answer from the father of modern music, the greatest genius who has used that lofty art. No higher authority could be found; and his words were these: "I recognize no sign of superiority in mankind other than

goodness." By that principle he lived, and by it he wrote; his art is overwhelmingly ethical, and if we were to tear up every record of his life, every word in the way of title or dedication or inscription upon his compositions, if we had nothing but the musical notes of his sonatas and symphonies, we should get precisely the same impressions; we should know that we were in the presence of a titanic conflict of the human will against the forces of fate, the blind cruelties of nature and the deliberate cruelties of class. We might not know that this man became deaf at the height of his powers; we might have no definite image to attach to the terrible hammer strokes of the Fifth Symphony; but we should know that here is torture, here is defeat and despair crying out, here is loveliness broken to pieces, trampled, crushed out of life; here also is man, clenching his hands and setting his teeth in grim resolve, proclaiming the supremacy of his own spirit, and rising to heights of power, in which he makes his joy out of the very materials of his torment. Some friend in Beethoven's presence called upon God; and the composer answered with the motto of his life: "O man, help thyself!"

## CHAPTER LI

### POLITICS IS FATE

We come now to one of the great intellects of modern times, a genius who made the culture of Germany known to the rest of the world. He is cited, along with Shakespeare, as an illustration of how great art holds itself aloof from propaganda; so it will be worth our while to study him carefully, and see how he lived and voiced the aristocratic ideals of his age.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe was born in Frankfort, his father being a wealthy lawyer. Through his eighty-three years of life he never knew a moment's inconvenience or waste of time from poverty. He was sent to the university, but was not interested in the study of law, which his father tried to force upon him; he studied the things he cared for, and incidentally gave himself to a life of pleasure, so that he came home at the age of nineteen with a severe hemorrhage.

It was the period of "Storm and Stress" in German literature; Rousseau and his wicked "Romanticism" had crossed the Rhine, and here was all the youth of Germany revolting against writing poetry in French; they insisted upon dealing with German heroes and experiencing unrestrained German emotions. Goethe was reading Shakespeare; and, spurning the classical forms, he wrote a drama about Goetz von Berlichingen, a medieval German knight who was big and bold and turbulent. This made Goethe a hero of the new insurgency. Also he wrote a story entitled "The Sorrows of Werther," about a young man who yearned agonizingly for the wife of his friend, and finally committed suicide. Goethe himself did not commit suicide, but lived to regret these youthful extravagances.

He fell in love more than once in these tumultuous days, his experience being exactly the opposite to that of Beethoven; it was the poet who was aristocratic and prudent, and it was the girl who suffered. Goethe had a fear of marriage, because it would interfere with his genius; but it is worth noting that the course he adopted brought him a great deal of unhappiness and waste of time.

At the age of twenty-six his destiny was decided by a meeting with the young Duke of Weimar. The duke was twenty, and conceived an intense admiration for the poet, and besought him to come and live at his court. To tempt him, and to keep him there, he gave him a beautiful home, together with some acres of land for a garden, and made him a state councilor with a salary, and before long gave him a title, enabling him to put the magic word "von" before his name. Thus Goethe became a court writer and a court man. You may call him the greatest of court writers and the most dignified of court men; nevertheless, there is a whole universe of difference between such a life, and that of an outsider and rebel like Beethoven.

The only trace of his youthful revolt which Goethe kept was in matters having to do with himself. He saved part of his time for his work, he took to traveling to get away from court functions, and in his later years, secure in his fame and power, he withdrew into his own home, and the court had to come to him. Thus he maintained the dignity of the intellectual man; but in his art ideals he became a strong conservative; and as for political and

social ideals, he solved the problem by having nothing to do with them.

It would be easy to make Goethe less attractive, by mentioning that the court lady who became his mistress for the next ten years had a husband somewhere in the background. But that would not be fair, because it was the custom of the time, and nobody in court saw anything wrong with adultery. But when Goethe, somewhere around the age of forty, fell very much in love with a daughter of the people and made her his mistress, court circles were shocked; they were still more shocked, when, after she had borne him a son, he brought her to his home; they were speechless, when in the end he married her. She justified their worst expectations by turning into a drunkard; and that was hard for a very dignified and reserved man of letters.

Goethe traveled to Italy, and fell in love with the classical ideal of art, and wrote an imitation Greek play. Coming back to Weimar, he took up court duties, including the organizing of a fire brigade and going to war. The French revolution had come, and King Louis of France was a prisoner, together with his beautiful Austrian queen, Marie Antoinette, who had asked why the people did not eat cake if they could not get bread. The sovereigns of Europe hastened to rescue this brilliant wit, and to overthrow the monster of revolution. Goethe's duke went along, with Goethe in his train. The poet showed his attitude toward the whole matter by writing a musical comedy while at the training camp, and gathering botanical specimens during the fighting.

This attitude he explained by saying that he had to shut his eyes to the events of his time, because otherwise he would have been driven mad. And I admit that it was painful to see the movement for freedom run wild in the Terror, and to see it betrayed by Napoleon, and to see the French people lured into a war of conquest, so that Voltaire's "l'Infame" was able to pose as a champion of national freedom, and thus to rivet its power upon the peoples once again. But why did these things happen? It was because men of genius and intellect had been indifferent to the misery of the French people, their degradation and enslavement. It was because when the people did rise and throw off their tyrants, there were so

few voices to explain the meaning of this event, and to defend the revolution's right to be. When Goethe went out with his duke, and lent the sanction of his name to the counter revolution, it was he who was making inevitable the Terror, it was he who was delivering the revolution to Napoleon. Bloodshed and misery overwhelmed Europe for twenty-five years; and Goethe, by withdrawing to his study and occupying himself with poetry and scientific research, encouraged the worst weakness of German philosophy and letters—the tendency to lull itself with high-sounding, abstract words, while the real life of the nation goes to the devil.

Reality broke in harshly enough upon this poet. Sixteen years after his military foray into France, the tables were turned, and Napoleon's cannon-balls came tumbling through the beautiful gardens at Weimar. Here were French troopers, flushed with the victory of Jena, pillaging the town, robbing the poet of both his wine and his money, and threatening to kill him in his bed. Two years later came the peace negotiations, and the poet lent his presence to balls and fetes, and was summoned to an audience with the master of Europe. He was then fifty-nine years old, a world genius, and Napoleon was thirty-nine years old, a world conqueror; the older man went, and permitted himself to be inspected by the younger. Goethe had a handsome presence, and Napoleon was pleased. "You are a man!" he exclaimed. "How old are you?" he demanded; and then: "You are very well preserved"—as if this were a Grecian scholar being purchased as a slave by a Roman proconsul!

"You have written tragedies?" demanded Napoleon; and a courtier hastened to mention that the poet had written several—also he had translated Voltaire's tragedy, "Mahomet." "It is not a good piece," said Napoleon, and went on to disapprove of dramas in which fate played a part, "What are they talking about with their fate? La politique est la fatalité." Here was an utterance that Goethe might well have applied through all the rest of his life. I could take it as a motto for this book. "Politics is fate!" Hardly could one pack more wisdom into five words of French or three of English!

But Goethe chose to keep his salary and position in the court, and to overlook the power of organized society

over the individual soul. When the time came for the German people to revolt against Napoleon he had no word of encouragement—quite the contrary, he pronounced it folly. Nor had he any word of protest against the cruelties of the Holy Alliance.

Yet, see the inconsistency! His greatest work is "Faust," a study of the problem of duty and happiness. Faust tries pleasure, he tries learning for learning's sake, and it brings him nothing. In the end he accepts useful service as the only ideal, and the draining of swamps and cultivating of land as a moral occupation. But what is the use of such work, if statesmen are permitted to make war, and to destroy in a few hours all that generations have built up? You may believe in aristocratic politics or in democratic politics; but how can you believe in the possibility of human happiness without wisdom in statesmen?

There is a better side to Goethe, which must not be overlooked. He was magnanimous, open-minded, and a friend to all men of genius. He met the poet Schiller, ten years younger than himself, ill in health and struggling with cruel poverty. Schiller was a poet of freedom, and stayed that to the end of his life. His first successful drama was "The Robbers," a glorification of revolt against medieval tyranny; his last was "William Tell," whose hero set Switzerland free from the Austrian yoke. The fact that Schiller was of humble origin made no difference to Goethe; he brought the young poet to Weimar, and got him a pension from the duke, and became his intimate friend.

And that was the best thing that happened in Goethe's life, for Schiller with his fine sincerity and idealism drove the older man to work. We are accustomed to see these two great names coupled together, and the critics point out that Schiller was the enthusiast, the "propagandist," while Goethe, the serene Olympian temperament, was the greater poet. The critics do not mention that Schiller had to waste most of his life doing wretched hack work, and died of tuberculosis at the age of forty-six. If Goethe, with all his leisure and independence, had died at that age, his greatest work would have been lost.

Can anyone deny that we get a world view from the writings of Goethe; that he has definite conclusions as to

every aspect of human life? Can anyone deny that his dramas and his novels, even his lyric poems, are saturated with philosophy? It so happens that his point of view is that which has been accepted by tradition and critical authority through all the ages; therefore it slides down easily, it does not taste like medicine, and we do not think of it as propaganda.

What is this point of view? The world is a place of blind and generally aimless strife, and scholars and men of genius are powerless to control it, and can only keep out of its way. "Renounce," said Goethe; and what is the first of all things you must renounce? Manifestly, the dream that you can manage your own time. Live simply, develop your highest faculties, leave a message and an example to the world; and somehow, at some future date —you do not attempt to say when or how—this message and this example may take effect, and truth and justice and mercy may prevail. Meantime, since you must live, and since the ruling classes own all the means of life, you must be polite to them, you must fit yourself into their ways, you must be a gentleman, a courtier, a man of property.

Thus by your example and daily practice you become a prop to the established order; and by the automatic operation of economic forces you become less and less tolerant of all rebels and disturbers of the peace. Because you know only the wealthy and the noble, you come to deal with them exclusively in your art works, you interpret their feelings, and behold life from their point of view. All critics unite in declaring that this is Reality, this is Nature, this is Art; while to object to this, and voice any other point of view, is Idealism, Preaching, and Propaganda.

## CHAPTER LII

### BEHIND THE HEDGE-ROWS

Spreading the magic carpet of the imagination, we take flight from the free and easy court of Weimar to the home of an English rector, where impropriety is scarcely whispered, and where a little old maid of genius lives amid tea-parties and the embroidering of linen and the visiting of

the poor, interrupted at intervals by the major crises of births, marriages and deaths.

Jane Austen was the youngest of seven children, who dwelt together in that amity which the Bible recommends but which frail humanity infrequently realizes. She was a genius without eccentricities, egotisms or rebellions; never did a writer of immortal books live a more conventional life or have less to write about. She had no literary friends, not even at the end of her life. Her best work was done at the age of twenty-two, and was a secret kept from the members of her family. She wrote on little sheets of paper, which could be quickly hidden under a blotter or a piece of "fancy work." Her books were not published until late in her life, and then they were published anonymously. She died of tuberculosis at the age of forty-two.

The characters in her novels are the people of the world she knew. Her theme is, of course, the theme of all bourgeois fiction, the property marriage. Here we see the golden love-glints flashing from Cupid's eyes; here we see the fortunes sailing about upon breezes of emotion; here we seen Sensibility controlled by Sense.

Not great fortunes, you understand, but modest ones, such as entitle one to be on the visiting list of an English country rector. A fortune sufficient to enable the hero to escape the inconvenience of working, and to live in the country and exhibit to mankind a beautiful and graceful specimen of the human race. A fortune sufficient to enable him to marry a lady of Sense and Sensibility, and to provide her with a beautiful home and a garden, and a few servants, and maintenance for whatever number of children it may please Providence to send. That is the sort of fortune for which Jane Austen's heroines are competing, and which each of them invariably gets—the bourgeois happy ending.

Do not misunderstand me: her heroines are not mercenary—that is, not with their conscious minds. The mercenary elements in their lives are instinctive and conventional; the laws of the British leisure classes, of "gentlefolk." These laws Jane Austen never questioned, nor does anyone of her heroines ever question them. Therefore it is possible for these ladies to be mercenary to the

point of ferocity, yet at the same time to be sentimental and even charming.

If you travel through the Jane Austen country you find the roads lined with hedge-rows, which bear flowers in the springtime, and are full of birds, and afford opportunity for delightful descriptions in novels; also they afford thrilling adventures, because a heroine can stand behind a hedge-row and listen to her best friend discussing her to her lover. Outside these hedge-rows walk common people of all sorts; farm laborers on their way to fourteen hours of animal-like toil; factory workers, pale and stunted; soldiers on the march; able seamen paying a visit to home; tradesmen, tourists—all sorts of persons one does not know. Behind the hedge-rows dwell the "gentlefolk," carefully guarded by the police magistrates; and the common people never by any chance penetrate the hedge-rows, except in the capacity of servants. So the young ladies of the "gentle" family meet no men save such as have been carefully investigated and approved; so it is possible for these ladies to be full of Sensibility—that is, quivering with excitement at the male approach—and yet entirely innocent of mercenary motives, and entirely safe from the danger of making an unmercenary match.

How perfectly this system works you may note in Jane Austen's novels. There are eight heroines, and eight fortunes to be married. One of the heroines takes the risk of marrying a clergyman who has no money except his "living." Two others marry clergymen who, in addition to their "livings," have good financial prospects. The other five marry non-clerical gentlemen of wealth. Mostly these fortunes come from land; everywhere over the Jane Austen novel there hovers a magic presence known as the "entailed estate." In only one case is there any hint of vulgar origin for the fortune, in a recent connection with "trade." Of all the fortunes, only one has actually been gained by the man who possesses it and bestows it upon the heroine; and this man has gained it in a most respectable Christian way—that is to say, not by "trade," but by killing and robbery. He has been a naval captain, and brings home his share of the prizes taken.

The great crimes and horrors of the world lie outside

the hedge-rows surrounding the Jane Austen rectory. We can hear the guns and smell the powder smoke, but the deadly missiles never pass the magic barrier. Two of Jane's brothers are naval officers, and they come and go in imposing uniforms; the Napoleonic wars are on, and they are guarding the channel, and in later life become admirals. An intimate friend of the family is Warren Hastings, who conquered India for the British; when he was placed on trial for wholesale graft, he explained by saying that when he considered his opportunities, he marveled, not that he had taken so much, but that he had not taken more. Nothing of anything like this enters into the novels.

What does enter are the quiverings of Sensibility, the ups and downs of the "tender emotions." When we were children we used to take a daisy and pull off the petals, and with petal number one we would say: "He loves me," and with petal number two: "He loves me not," and so on. With petal number one our heart goes up, and with petal number two it goes down. There is another question, equally thrilling: "Do I love him, or do I not?" Many things get in the way; Pride and Prejudice, for example. It is hard to know our own minds; and sometimes when we hesitate too long, it is necessary for the older members of our family to apply Persuasion. (I am making puns on the titles of the novels.)

I would not be understood to disparage this little English old maid. She did not make her world, in which the father of the family preaches in the name of the Prince of Peace, and the sons go out to kill and loot. She is a most charming and witty old maid, and her queer people are alive in every throb of their quivering hearts. She was a sly little body, and we suspect her of knowing more than she tells. There was a terrible scandal whispered concerning her, which she vehemently denied; we hate to pass it on, but this is a book of plain speaking and we have to do our duty—so let it be recorded that some of the neighbors suspected Jane Austen of watching them at tea-parties and church fairs, with the intention of putting their peculiarities into her books!

## CHAPTER LIII

## TORY ROMANCE

Upon our first visit to Scotland we kept low company; but now we return to dwell in a castle, and play the host to our Sovereign Lord the King.

Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh in 1771, the son of a prosperous lawyer who held the high office of sheriff. The father made a specialty of his country's antiquities, and the boy was brought up, as it were, in the property-room of a moving picture studio. He was lame, which made it impossible for him to repeat the valorous deeds of his ancestors; so he took to dreams, and gave the world a new form of art, the historical romance.

The French revolution occurred in his youth, and he reacted from it as did all his class. It was the job of British Toryism to crush the republican idea; with money derived from the trade of the whole world, it subsidized the kings and emperors of Europe in their attacks upon France. The result was to raise up Napoleon, and before Napoleon was beaten Europe had waded through twenty-five years of blood. Walter Scott's function was to glorify the ancient loyalties and pieties in whose name that world-crime was committed; and for his services he was made a baronet, and paid a million dollars, equal to five or ten times as much in our money.

Personally he was a generous and kindly gentleman, but he lent his name and influence to the most vicious rowdies of his party. Nor was he content with writing; he turned out and did his part as a smasher of the "Reds." At the age of forty-one we find him writing to the poet Southey like an earlier incarnation of Attorney-General Palmer. "You are quite right in apprehending a *Jacquerie;* the country is mined below our feet." He goes on to tell how he discovered a meeting of weavers in a large manufacturing village, and how he did his duty as an officer of the law. "I apprehended the ringleaders and disconcerted the whole project; but in the course of my inquiries, imagine my surprise at discovering a bundle of letters and printed manifestoes, from which it appeared that the Manchester Weavers' Committee corresponds with every manufacturing town in the South and West of Scotland,

and levies a subsidy of 2s. 6d. per man—(an immense sum)—for the ostensible purpose of petitioning Parliament for redress of grievances, but doubtless to sustain them in their revolutionary movements. An energetic administration, which had the confidence of the country, would soon check all this; but it is our misfortune to lose the pilot when the ship is on the breakers. But it is sickening to think of our situation."

Walter Scott's literary career began with narrative poems based upon the love-makings and quarrelings of old Scottish chieftains. Then he began writing novels on these same themes, and it was as if he had struck a pick into a pit full of golden nuggets. To his Tory age he came as a heaven-sent magician with exactly the right spells to prop up the tottering old system. The public began to buy the Waverley novels so fast that it was impossible to get them bound in time. England went wild over them, and Europe as well; one million, four hundred thousand volumes were sold in France alone. This was the time of the "Holy Alliance," and another King Louis had been set upon the French throne.

It was not quite the proper thing for an eminent legal gentleman to write novels, so Scott published the books anonymously, and always denied their authorship; but he did not refuse to take the money. He was a fluent writer, and could turn out a volume in a month or six weeks, and would get a thousand pounds before he had finished it. Never was there such prosperity, since the days of Aladdin and his wonderful lamp.

Our Tory novelist was a big overgrown boy; he could never have written such propaganda otherwise. He began to spend his money as a boy would spend it—to make real the world of chivalry and romance in nineteenth century Scotland, fully launched into the age of capitalist industrialism! He built himself an imitation castle of colossal size, "with a tall tower at either end . . . sundry zigzagged gables . . . a myriad of indentations and parapets, and machicolated eaves; most fantastic waterspouts; labelled windows, not a few of them painted glass . . . stones carved with heraldries innumerable." And inside, of course, were all the stage properties, "cuirasses, helmets, swords of every order, from the claymore and rapier to some German execution-

er's swords." Here our hero kept open house to all the world of rank and fashion, with gay hunting parties and dances, drinking bouts, and singing of ballads and the sounding of pibrochs. It was his aim, in his own words, "to found a family"; besides becoming a baron, he married his eldest son to an heiress, and the climax of his career came when King George IV came to visit his northern dominion, and to be the novelist's guest.

It so happened that this king was an odious fat lecher; but that made no difference, he was Sir Walter's Most Gracious and Sovereign Lord. In an ecstasy of loyalty, the novelist took possession of a glass from which His Majesty had drunk a toast. This was to be preserved as the most sacred of the treasures of Abbotsford; but, alas, the novelist put it in his pocket, and in a moment of absent-mindedness sat down on it, and cut himself severely! It did not occur to his pious soul that this might be an effort of Providence to teach him something about drinking, or about the worship of lecherous kings.

Here in Hollywood we see these magic castles arise on the movie lots; we see the costumes reproduced with minute exactitude, and then surmounting them we see the heads of screen dolls, male and female, lounge lizards and jazz dancers and queens from department stores and manicure parlors. And just so it is in the novels of Sir Walter: the costumes and scenery are those of old-time Scotland, but the characters are the gentlemen and servants and tenants of Scott's own neighborhood. He had creative energy and a sense of humor, he makes the game very real, and we can enjoy it, provided we know what we are getting. It is not even Scott's own time, it is merely the Tory propaganda of that time. It is medievalism and absolutism dressed up and glorified, with every trace of blood and filth and horror wiped away; a fictionized sermon upon the text: Vote the Conservative ticket.

But alas for the dreams of stand-pat poets! First came the ruin of his personal hopes. Among the rascals of his gang were two who persuaded him into a publishing business, to reap the millions out of his popularity. They stole everything in sight, and then went bankrupt, and left him at the age of fifty-five with a debt of a hundred and seventeen thousand pounds. He set to work to write pot-boilers and pay it off; an action which has made him

a hero to his biographers. And of course, it is an honorable thing for an artist to pay his debts; we all know that most disagreeable of characters, the Bohemian genius who borrows from everybody he meets and repays nothing. But it seems necessary to point out that a novelist owes two debts; one to his business creditors, and the other to those who are to read his books in future time. We are not satisfied with Sir Walter's pot-boilers, and we deny that a man of genius has a right to drive himself to death and bring on a stroke of paralysis in four years, in order to satisfy a romantic dream of honor.

Equally pitiful was the wreck of Sir Walter's political ideals. In vain did he glorify the loyalty of the Scotch peasants, their fidelity to their lairds; in vain was all his hounding of the rebellious weavers with the weapons of the law. They continued to organize, and the peasants began to mutter and snarl; they wanted the vote, they clamored for rights both political and economic. A most wicked project known as the Reform Bill came up before Parliament, to give the vote to common working people; and Sir Walter, sixty years old and ill, persisted in taking part in the campaign. He made a speech in which he warned the audience that all these licentious movements came from France. This was forty years after the French revolution, and the Bolshevik bogie had lost its power to terrify; Sir Walter was hissed by his audience. Later on he personally saw to the arrest of a radical rascal on the street, and got himself stoned and mobbed. It was a shock he never got over, and he carried the memory to his grave a year or two later.

Fate is usually kind to aged Tories of this sort; it takes them off the stage of life before the failure of their hopes is too apparent. Imagine the shock to this chivalrous old soul if he could come out of his grave today, and visit the House of Parliament, and hear the "left wing" members, elected from his beloved highlands, shouting for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat! Now indeed would he say: "The country is mined below our feet!"

## CHAPTER LIV

### THE MEANING OF MAGIC

The effect of the French revolution upon poets is a subject of especial interest to us, because the period is so nearly identical with our own. There were several English poets whose reactions to the great event it will pay us to consider.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a clergyman's son, born in 1772, so that he was twenty-one years old when King Louis' head fell into the basket of the guillotine. At that time Coleridge was traveling about giving Unitarian lectures, a most revolutionary occupation. He met another young enthusiast, Robert Southey, and they had a Utopian dream of a free community on the banks of the Susquehanna River. It was to be called the Pantisocracy, and to get funds Coleridge set out to canvass for his Unitarian paper. The dream ended when the two poets married sisters.

At the age of twenty-eight we find Coleridge in the full tide of the reaction against France. One of the organs of the Tory party, the London "Morning Post," is paying him a salary to write articles clamoring for renewal of the war on the French republic; it was said in Parliament that the rupture of the peace was brought about by these articles. For the balance of his days the one-time Unitarian was a pillar of the Anglican church, and of every form of reaction. He had become a devotee of German metaphysics, also of opium; a wanderer and a wreck, living on charity, and planning colossal literary labors which came to nothing. He was sent to a nursing-home under the charge of a physician, where he died at the age of sixty-two.

So much for the life; and now for the poetry. There are only a few hundred lines of it, all written before the poet entered the Tory service. A study of it makes clear the spiritual tragedy; it is poetry of emotion and music, with a total absence of judgment and will. From only one of the poems, "The Ancient Mariner," can you extract a human meaning; that if one man commits an act of cruelty against a bird, the moral forces of the universe will punish

a shipload of innocent men, sparing only the one who is guilty!

It is the poetry of opium. Indeed, the most famous of all the verses, "Kubla Khan," was actually an opium dream, transferred to paper after return to consciousness—

"Now, hold on a moment," says Mrs. Ogi. "Here is a letter from a Poet. You are going to have a lot of them reading this book, and wanting to pull your hair out; so you might as well have it out with them now. This Poet names 'Kubla Khan' as the perfect type of the 'pure' poem."

"I know. Swinburne calls it, 'for absolute melody and splendor the first poem in the language.' It happens that the first five lines sum up the whole; so it will pay us to stop and analyze them, take them apart, syllable by syllable, and see how the trick is done. I quote the lines; and in order to play fair with the poet, shut your eyes and give yourself up to his spell. If you have any feeling for beauty of words, you will feel a chill running up and down your spine."

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

First of all, note the meter; every long syllable is naturally long, and every short syllable is naturally short; so the lines flow softly, like running waves. Not merely are the rhymes perfect, there are hidden rhymes scattered through the lines; the Xanadu and Khan, also the two u's in the first line, and the two a's in the fourth line. Note the repetition of the consonant sounds. The X in the first line is pronounced as K; and we have seen shrewd business men in the United States collect many millions of dollars from the American people by the magic of the letter K three times repeated. There are two d's in the second line, four r's in the third, two m's in the fourth, two s's in the fifth. There is not a single harsh sound in the entire five lines; they have every musical charm that is possible to words.

So much for the sounds; and now for the sense. Let us take it word by word, and see what it tells us. Xanadu:

a place you never heard of, therefore mysterious, stimulating to the imagination; taken in connection with Kubla Khan, it suggests Tartar despotism, cruelty, terror. "A stately pleasure-dome": magnificence in the fashion of the Arabian Nights, extravagance, a free rein to desire. The word "decree" reinforces this; suggesting an Oriental despot, who follows his whims without restraint. "Alph": an unknown stream, therefore mysterious. "The sacred river": this reinforces the idea of despotism, adding to our fear of earthly kings that of an all-powerful one in heaven. "Caverns measureless to man": again mystery, and the fear which the unknown inspires. "Sunless sea": this clenches the impression; for without the sun there can be no life, and the picture is the last word in desolation.

The rest of the poem is in the same key. We hear about "ancestral voices prophesying war," and a stream haunted "by woman wailing for her demon lover." We are told about "an Abyssinian maid," "a damsel with a dulcimer," etc.

Note that everyone of these images appeals to reactionary emotions, fear or sensuality. By sensuality the reason is dragged from its throne; while fear destroys all activity of the mind, causing abasement and submission. Moreover—and here is the point essential to our argument—almost every image in this poem turns out on examination to be a lie. There is no such place as Xanadu; and Kubla Khan has nothing to teach us but avoidance. His pleasures were bloody and infamous, and there was nothing "stately" about his "pleasure-dome." There never was a river Alph, and the sacredness of any river is a fiction of a priestly caste, preying on the people. There are no "caverns measureless to man"; while as for a "sunless sea," a few arc-lights would solve the problem. The "woman wailing for her demon lover" is a savage's nightmare; while as for the "Abyssinian maid," she would have her teeth blackened and would stink of rancid palm oil.

From the beginning to the end, the poem deals with things which are sensual, cruel, and fatal to hope. These old fears and cravings are buried deep in our subconsciousness; the poet touches them, and they quiver inside us, and we don't know what it means, so we call it "magic." That is the favorite term of the art for art's

sakers; they don't know what this "magic" is, and they don't want to know, but the psychoanalyst tells them.

Says Mrs. Ogi: "Our Poet will be pained. He lives by magic, and you seek to destroy it!"

Says Ogi: "There are emotions equally thrilling, equally wonderful, which are stirred by the discovery of new truth and the contemplation of progress. What I am trying to do is to persuade the poets to use their brains and common sense, and apply melody and beauty of sound to the good things of the future, instead of to the evil things of the past."

"Give them a few illustrations," says Mrs. Ogi.

"I will name eight things which have been in my daily newspapers during the past week, any one of which is every bit as exciting, every bit as provocative of ecstasy as 'Kubla Khan.'

"Number One: The air is full of music, traveling half way round the earth. Number Two: Aeroplanes are circling the earth for the first time in history. Number Three: A scientist has given his life in the effort to find a cure for cancer. Number Four: Mars is coming nearer, and we have a chance to learn how the canals are made, and perhaps to get messages from a new race. Number Five: In a physics laboratory, only two or three miles from our home, men are taking the atom to pieces and preparing to extract its energy. Number Six: We are discovering how to take control of our subconscious minds and master our hidden life. Number Seven: A group of scientists in New York are exploring, by means of laboratory tests, the energies we call 'psychic.' Number Eight: In every civilized country today the workers are organizing themselves to put an end to parasitism based upon class privilege.

"Here are eight themes for poets, every one of which has the advantage of being real, and not fading away upon analysis. Here are pleasure-domes that are truly "stately," rivers that are truly "sacred," caverns that are truly "measureless to man." These modern themes have only one drawback, from the point of view of the poet; they require him to think as well as to feel!"

## CHAPTER LV

### THE TORY WHIP

Another poet who was frightened out of his wits by the French revolution was Robert Southey. But he took to respectability instead of to opium.

He was born in 1774, the son of a linen draper. At the age of nineteen he was full of Rousseau, Goethe, and the "infidelity" of Gibbon. He was so keen for France that he wrote an epic about Joan of Arc; also he planned the "Pantisocracy" with Coleridge. But then he married the other sister, and was shocked by the Terror; a wealthy man gave him an annuity, and he settled down to write long and romantic poems about princes and conquerors, Celtic, Mexican, Arab, Indian—stage properties from all over the world, combined with standard British moralizing.

In less than ten years we find Southey evolved into a pillar of reaction; at the age of thirty-three he received a pension from the government, and two years later he joined Walter Scott and Gifford as the literary whips of the Tory party. They published the "Quarterly Review," and we shall see before long what they did to Byron, Shelley and Keats. At thirty-nine Southey became the laureate, and delivered the customary New Year's ode in support of church and state; a procedure his biographer defends by explaining that he "was earning a provision for his girls." It is of course a pleasant thing for a poet with many daughters to save up the purchase price of a husband for each; but what about the cotton spinners, whose ten-year-old daughters were working fourteen and sixteen hours a day in the mills, with the Tory squirarchy taxing the bread out of their mouths?

For centuries the literary jackals who served the British ruling classes had starved in garrets; but now their services were beginning to be appreciated, and they were admitted to the class they defended. The diligent Southey wrote a "Naval Biography," a hymn of praise to Britain's sea-lords, and got five hundred pounds per volume for it, and established himself as England's leading man of letters.

But alas, there was a skeleton in his literary closet. In

his youth he had written a poem in praise of Watt Tyler, proletarian rebel of old England; and now someone got hold of the manuscript, and published it secretly, and Southey's frantic efforts in the courts failed to stop it. Sixty thousand copies were sold, and a member of Parliament stood up and read extracts from it, side by side with the laureate's latest article in the "Quarterly Review," denouncing parliamentary reform. To the respectability of Southey's time this reading was an outrage, but for my part, it is the only reading of Southey I ever enjoyed. Here was a scholar, standing on his literary dignity—and what was his attitude to his fellow authors who had not sold out? He clamored for Hunt and Hazlitt to be deported to a penal settlement; while for Byron he wanted "the whip and the branding-iron"!

We today know Southey by his "Life of Nelson," which serves as required reading in most American high schools. We are told that this is because it is a great work of literature, but the true reason is because it is a work of propaganda for the Army and Navy League. If you want to study the art of hero-making, note the biographer's deft handling of the Lady Hamilton episode of Nelson's career. This regulation movie "vamp" had married an English nobleman in his dotage; and she got hold of Nelson in Naples, where she was the favorite of an unspeakably corrupt court. Southey tells us there was nothing "criminal" in the hero's relationship to this lady; which is the English way of stating that Nelson did not commit adultery. If this be true, it is rather singular that Nelson should have believed himself the father of Lady Hamilton's two children!

The queen of this Neapolitan court was a sister of Marie Antoinette, the French queen who had told the people to eat cake if they could not get bread; and through Lady Hamilton's hold on Nelson, he was led to use the British fleet in furtherance of Neapolitan royalist conspiracies, and in defiance of orders from home. But you don't find any of that in Southey! You are told that when Nelson returned to England, he "separated from" his wife; the fact being that his wife left him because he insisted on bringing the "vamp" lady to live in the home with her! In view of these details, I asked Americans to consider whether it would not be better for their children

to read about the democratic English heroes, such as John Milton and Oliver Cromwell and Isaac Newton and John Ruskin and Keir Hardie?

## CHAPTER LVI

### THE FEAR THAT KILLS

One more, and we are done with the melancholy tale of the poets who ran away from the French revolution.

William Wordsworth was born in 1770, his father being lawyer to a noble earl who robbed him of five thousand pounds. That may possibly have accounted for some of the early rebellious emotions of the poet. He was graduated from Cambridge at the age of twenty-one, and went to France at the height of the revolutionary fervor. He has told us in his verse of the stirrings which then possessed him; to be young at such a time "was very heaven."

But the poet, in telling us about his experiences in France, left out a vital part thereof. The story had to wait a century and a quarter before a professor of Princeton University dug it out. While Wordsworth was abroad he carried on an affair with a young French girl of good family. She bore him a daughter, but he did not marry her; instead, he came back to England, and lived most piously with his sister, and became a preacher of the proprieties. We can understand how, looking back on France, it seemed to him a land of license, meriting stern rebuke from a British moralist.

His first book of poems, "Lyrical Ballads," was published in 1798. He had by then become a reactionary in religion and politics, but in poetry he was an innovator, because he dealt with the simple, every-day feelings of his own heart, and with the peasant people of his neighborhood. He was mercilessly ridiculed by the critics, and retired into himself, to live a frugal life upon an income of a hundred pounds a year, bequeathed to him by a well-to-do friend. In the course of time the British ruling class realized that there was no real harm in this nature-mystic, and at the age of forty-three he received a salary as a distributor of stamps; nine years later an annuity was allowed him, and a year after that be became poet laureate. He passionately opposed every political reform,

and composed a series of "Ecclesiastical Sonnets," dealing with the church rigmarole of England; also a pamphlet bitterly attacking the proposition to run a railroad into the country of his dreams. At the age of seventy-five we find him, white-haired and venerable, kneeling, in the presence of a large assembly, to kiss the hand of an extremely dull young girl by the name of Victoria.

Wordsworth was one of the teachers of my youth, and I do not want to be unjust to him because he turned Tory before thirty. What we have to do is to understand him, and to draw a moral from him. The worship of Nature is like the worship of God; as a rule it is a reactionary influence, cutting one off from real life; but here and there it may be a source of inner energy, enabling a man to stand for his own convictions against the world. To Wordsworth in his early days Nature was that, and no poet has uttered in more noble and beautiful language this sense of oneness with the great mother of all life. His writing at its best is as beautiful, and also as sound, as anything in English.

But here is the point to get clear: practically all this poetry was written in eight years; you might count on your ten fingers and ten toes all the lines that Wordsworth wrote after the age of thirty-five which are worth anyone's while to read. In my youth, when I was studying poetry, it was my habit to go through a poet, beginning with the first page of volume one and ending with the last page of volume five, or ten, or whatever it might be. In the case of Wordsworth, it was volume twelve, and he was the one poet with whom I fell down. The "Ecclesiastical Sonnets" finished me; I testify that of all the dreary drivel in the world's literature, this carries the prize.

There were two men in Wordsworth: the instinctive man, who experienced overwhelming feelings, and the conscious man, who was terrified by those feelings. This is no guess of mine, but something which Wordsworth himself explained over and over again: "My apprehensions come in crowds. . . . My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills . . . Me this unchartered freedom tires; I feel the weight of chance desires." So the Wordsworth who believed in the Tory party and the Thirty-nine Articles put the screws on the poet, and not

merely the emotions, but the brains of a great genius withered before the age of forty.

The cases of Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth suggest the inquiry: is it possible for a great poet to be a conservative? In old times, yes; for the conservatives then had something to say for themselves. But in the last hundred years the meaning of the class struggle has become so apparent, the consequences of class exploitation have become so obvious, that a man who fails to see them must be deficient in intelligence, a man who fails to care about them must be deficient in heart and conscience; and these are things without which great poetry cannot be made.

## CHAPTER LVII

### THE FIRST LORD OF LETTERS

Fortunately not all the poets of England let themselves be frightened into reaction by the French revolution.

George Gordon, Lord Byron, was born in 1788. His father was a rake and blackguard. "Your mother is a fool," said a schoolmate; and Byron answered, "I know it." This, you must admit, was a poor start in life for a boy. He had a club foot, concerning which he was frightfully sensitive; but in other ways he was divinely handsome, and much sought after by the ladies; so he alternated between fits of solitude and melancholy, and other fits of amorous excess. Being a lord, he was a great person all his life. Being a man of genius, he enormously increased his greatness. He lived always before the world, in one sublime pose or another, and composed whole epics about himself and his moods.

He traveled, and became a cosmopolitan figure, and wild tales were spread concerning his adventures in Europe. Then he came back to England, and published a poem, "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," which made such a sensation as Britain had never known before. "I awoke one morning and found myself famous," he said. But he affected to despise this fame; he, a noble lord, must not be confused with vulgar writing fellows. He would toss a manuscript to his publishers with a careless gesture—though the manuscript might be worth one or two thou-

sand pounds. I cannot recall any high-up aristocrat who achieved literary greatness to compare with Byron; he was the first lord of letters of that age and of all ages.

He composed a series of verse romances, tales of Eastern despots and their crimes, in the fashion of the day. They were full of melody and rhythm, and their heroes were always that melancholy, sublime, outlaw figure which we known as "Byronic." This autobiographic hero was eagerly taken up by the fashionable world, especially the female part. One great lady, already supplied with a husband, adored the poet wildly, then despised him, threatened to kill him, attacked him in a novel, and finally, when she met his funeral cortege in the street, fainted and went insane.

He married an heiress, quite cynically for her money, spent the money, and had everything he owned attached by his creditors. Then his wife left him, with hints of mysterious wickedness. He was overwhelmed by a storm of abuse, and went into exile for the rest of his life. The wife never told her story, but many years later the American novelist, Harriet Beecher Stowe, published what she claimed was the truth, that Byron had been guilty of incest with his half-sister. His lordship had by that time become a "standard author," and the critics were outraged by Mrs. Stowe's indiscretion; even now they do not speak out loud about the matter.

In Switzerland the poet met Shelley, the best influence that ever came into his life. He recognized this new friend as the purest soul he knew, and praised his character ardently in his letters, though he never paid the public tribute to Shelley's writings which they deserved. Shelley turned Byron's thoughts to politics, and he wrote "The Prisoner of Chillon," one of the noblest of his poems. But then he went off to Venice, and amused himself with numerous intrigues, and got fat. He began "Don Juan," a new kind of epic poem, mocking itself, as well as everything else. It is a hateful picture of a hateful world, but it has almost infinite verve and energy, and we recognize in it a great spirit trying to lift itself above an age of corruption by the instrument of scorn.

It was the time of the "Holy Alliance," and the few men who cared for freedom were living in exile or hiding from the police. Byron associated with these revolution-

ists, and gave them both money and his name. He became a neighbor of Shelley's, and again immersed himself in politics and literature. He wrote his drama "Cain," in which he deals with the problems of human fate from the revolutionary point of view. To the religionists of the time, this was most awful blasphemy; the poet Southey frothed at the mouth, and wrote his "Vision of Judgment," portraying the damnation of Byron. His angry lordship came back with a poem of the same name—so effective that the publisher was jailed for six months! One stanza, describing the poet laureate, will serve for a sample of Byron's fighting mood:

> He had written praises of a regicide;
> He had written praises of all kings whatever;
> He had written for republics far and wide,
> And then against them bitterer than ever:
> For pantisocracy he once had cried
> Aloud, a scheme less moral than 'twas clever;
> Then grew a hearty anti-jacobin—
> Had turned his coat—and would have turned his skin.

Byron had now become the voice of liberty against reaction throughout Europe. And this was a brand new thing, seeming a kind of insanity to the Tories. There had been an abundance of dissipated lords, but never before a lord of revolt! Byron joined the secret society of the Carbonari, and took part in their attempt to free Italy. When they failed, he was not discouraged, but wrote: "There will be blood shed like water, and tears like mist; but the peoples will conquer in the end." In those words we know the voice of a thinker and a man.

He was now thirty-five years of age, restless, tormented by a sense of futility. The Greek people were carrying on a war for liberation against the Turks, and Byron went to help them, and thus set a crown upon his life. He died of a fever, early in the campaign; and so today, when we think of him, we think not merely of a nobleman and a poet, but of a man who laid down wealth and fame and worldly position for the greatest of all human ideals.

In the beginning he had written to amuse himself and his readers; he had catered to their sentimentalism and their folly. But in the end he came to despise his readers, and wrote only to shock them. They had made a world

of lies; and one man would tell them the truth. That is why today we rank him as a world force in the history of letters. We are no longer the least bit thrilled by his wickedness; we think of such things as pathological and are moved only to pity. We do not see anything picturesque about a great lord who travels over Europe with a train of horses and carriages, dogs, fowls, monkeys, servants, and mistresses; the Sunday supplements of our newspapers have over-supplied us with such material. But we are interested in a poet who possessed a clear eye and a clear brain, who saw the truth, and spoke it to all Europe, and helped to set free the future of the race.

## CHAPTER LVIII

### THE ANGEL OF REVOLT

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born in 1792, which made him four years younger than Byron. His father was the richest baronet in the county of Sussex, a great landlord and a ferocious Tory, who typified the spirit of his age and drove his son almost to madness.

The boy was sent to school at Eton, a dreadful place inhabited by gnomes who wear all day the clothes which our little rich boys wear to evening parties, and the hats which our grown-up rich boys wear to the opera. They had a system of child slavery known as "fagging," and Shelley revolted against it and was tortured. He was a swift, proud spirit, made frantic by the sight or even the thought of tyranny; so sensitive that he swooned at the scent of the flowers in the Alpine valleys. He was gifted with a marvelous mind, ravenous for knowledge, and absorbing it at incredible speed.

He went to Oxford, where at the age of nineteen he published a pamphlet entitled, "The Necessity for Atheism." A reading discloses that the title might better have been "The Necessity for Abolishing Ecclesiasticism Masquerading as Christianity." But it is not likely that such a change of title would have helped Shelley, who was unceremoniously kicked out of the university, and cast off by the Tory baronet who controlled his purse-strings.

So we find him, an outcast in London, living in

lodgings and almost starving. He met a girl of sixteen, the daughter of a coffee-house proprietor, and hoping to convert her to his sublime faith, he ran away and married her. At the age of twenty we find him in Ireland, issuing an "Address to the Irish People" and circulating it on the streets. The scholarly critics of Shelley speak of this as the absurd extravagance of boyhood; whereas it was plain common sense and the obvious moral duty of every English poet. Infinitely touching it is to read this pamphlet, and note its beauty of spirit and sublimity of faith, not exceeded by the utterances of Jesus. All that was wrong with Shelley's advice was that it was too good both for Ireland and England. For distributing it Shelley's servant was sent to jail for six months.

The poet's wife had no understanding of his ideals, and the couple were unhappy. After two years of married life, Shelley met the sixteen-year-old daughter of Godwin, revolutionary philosopher, and ran away with her. That was the crime of his life, for which he was condemned to infamy by his own time, and has hardly yet been pardoned. Two laters later his former wife drowned herself; and the British lord chancellor deprived the poet of the custody of their two children, on the ground that he was an unfit person. We shall discuss the ethics of this affair later on. Suffice it for the moment to say that Shelley, broken in heart but not in will, fled to the Continent for refuge, and devoted the last four years of his life to the task of overthrowing the British caste system. A hundred years have passed, and he has not yet succeeded; but let no one be too sure that he will not succeed in the end!

He lived in Switzerland and Italy, and worked with desperate intensity, so that he brought on tuberculosis. There are no four years in the life of any other writer which gave us such treasures of the mind and spirit. The critics of Shelley judge him by his boyhood and his horrible scandal. But taking these last years, the impression we get is of maturity of mind, dignity of spirit, firmness of judgment. If you want to know this Shelley, read the wonderful letters he wrote from Switzerland. Read his essay, recently discovered and published, "A Philosophical View of Reform," in which the whole program of radical propaganda is laid out with perfect insight and beauty of

utterance. Read "The Defense of Poetry," one of the finest pieces of eloquence in English. Note the soundness of his critical judgment, which erred in only one respect—an under-estimate of his own powers. He was humble to Byron, a lesser person both as poet and as man.

One after another Shelley now poured out the marvelous works on which his fame is based. He took the old myth of Aeschylus and wrote a drama, "Prometheus Unbound," which might be described as the distilled essence of revolt, the most modern of philosophical dramas, proclaiming the defiance of the human spirit to all ordained gods. At the other extreme, and written in the same year, was "The Cenci," a tragic story out of Renaissance Italy, human and simple, therefore poignant and real. The poet Keats died, and Shelley wrote "Adonais" —and those who think that art exists for art's sake and beauty for beauty's sake, make note that here is a work which combines all the perfections of poetry, and yet has a moral, a fighting message.

He wrote also political comedies in the style of Aristophanes—representing English society by an ecstatic chorus of pigs. So savage is this lashing that even today English critics keep silence about "Swellfoot the Tyrant." The odious fat lecher, King George IV, was sued for divorce by his wife, Queen Caroline, and it was a most horrible scandal, which Britain hardly dared to whisper. I remember when I was a student in college, twenty-five years ago, searching the libraries in an effort to find out the contents of the "Green Bag" which figures in Shelley's drama; but no commentator would tell me—and I don't know yet!

Shelley has the qualities of sublimity and fervor; also he has the defects of these qualities—he is often windy and wordy and unreal. But in his last miraculous years he shed these faults, and produced lyrics of such loveliness that he is today the poet of poets, the soul companion of generous and idealistic youth. In his "Mask of Anarchy" are songs of revolt which have reached the workers—and which therefore English critics still find it necessary to deprecate! A couple of years ago was celebrated in London the anniversary of Shelley's death, and there assembled a great number of people of the sort who would have skinned him while he was alive. A

famous editor, Mr. J. C. Squires, took occasion to quote the poem: "Men of England, wherefore plow?" How obviously foolish! If the men of England did not plow, they would starve! But it just happens that Shelley did not say that; what he said was: "Men of England, wherefore plow for the lords who lay ye low?" And five million, five hundred thousand labor votes echo: "Wherefore?"

This poet of the future was scorned in his lifetime, as no other great Englishman in history. He was the by-word of the literary wits of London; "Prometheus Unbound," they said, an excellent name: who would bind it? By Sir Walter Scott and his ruffians of the Tory "Review," Shelley's name could not be spoken without crossing yourself. The poet Moore cried out in horror—Tommy, little snob of the drawing-rooms, who "dearly loved a lord." And Wordsworth, ignorant and bigoted, living among his peasants, reading nothing; and Southey, turncoat and prig. Even Byron made no fight for Shelley's fame; while Byron's friends, the fashionable idlers of the Continent, rebuked him for keeping such disreputable company.

Even two generations later the evil spell was not broken. Matthew Arnold, standard English critic, read about Shelley's friends, and lifted his scholarly hands and cried: "What a set!" It did not occur to the critic to ask what other kind of set Shelley might have had. What people had he to choose among? Arnold had not tried being a radical, so as to see what queer people swarm about you—especially when you are known to have an income of four thousand pounds a year, and to give away nearly all of it! A poet who believes everything good about his fellows, and who lives in dreams of exalted nobleness, is the last person in the world to discover the faults of those who gather about him. And after he has made the discovery, he remains a dreamer; instead of casting them off, in the fashion of the good, respectable world, he clings to them, trying to help them, often in spite of themselves.

Shelley believed in "free love," and tried out his theories; and that horrified Matthew Arnold, who said after reading the record, "One feels sickened forever of the subject of irregular relationships." Quite so; I also

have seen people try out this theory, and have felt sickened. But consider the question, in which way will the race more quickly acquire knowledge as to the rights and wrongs of sex—if men say honestly what they believe, and tell frankly what they do, or if they preach one code and practice another, and hide their sins in a dark corner?

Shelley followed the former course; he was young, and knew no older person who understood him and could give him wise advice. He believed that if your heart was full of generosity and kindness and unselfishness and a burning sense of justice, you could trust your desires, even those of love. He tried it, and filled his life with pain and tragedy. And seventy or eighty years later comes an eminent and well-established critic, and in solemn tones protests that it is a crime aganist good taste to give us these facts! Let poets follow the plan of Wordsworth, who sowed his one wild oat in a foreign land, and put a heavy stone of silence over the crop, and became a Tory laureate and pillar of Churchianity!

In the course of a hundred years we have got all the details of Shelley's two marriages; we know that when he eloped with Harriet Westbrook, his first wife, he told her his ideas on the subject of love. She professed to agree with him; but, of course, being a sixteen-year-old child, that meant nothing. She was ignorant, and in no way fitted to be the life companion of a great poet. When Shelley left her he took care of her and the two children; her suicide two years later was caused by the fact that she had an unhappy love affair with another man, and was with child by this man.

Here is a problem which will not be solved in our time, nor for a long time to come: what is to be done when two people have loved, and one ceases to love while the other goes on loving? For the present, our only task is to get straight the facts about Shelley's case; the central fact being that he was damned for holding a revolutionary opinion and acting on it. If all he had wanted was to indulge his passions and keep out of trouble, the way was clear before him; the old Tory baronet, his father, had explained with brutal frankness that he would never pardon a marriage with a woman below Shelley's rank in life, but he was willing to assume responsibility for the support of any number of illegitimate children the

poet might wish to bring into existence. Such was the moral code against which Shelley revolted; such was the world in which he tried to live according to the principles of justice, freedom and love.

He died at the age of thirty, drowned in a storm while sailing a boat; and with him perished the finest mind the English race had produced. I make this statement deliberately, knowing the ridicule it will excite; but I ask you, before you decide: take the men of genius of England one by one, wipe out their lives after the age of thirty, and see what you have left. Will you take Shakespeare? You will know him as the author of "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece" and "Love's Labor Lost" and "The Comedy of Errors," and possibly "Richard III" and some sonnets. Will you take Milton, with "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" and "Comus" and "Lycidas," and nothing else? Will you go to the Continent, and take Goethe, who outlived Shelley? What would you think of Goethe if you had only "Goetz" and "Werther" and a few lyric poems?

Shelley was one among the sons of Rousseau who did not falter and turn back to feudalism, Catholicism, or mysticism of any sort. He fixed his eyes upon the future, and never wavered for a moment. He attacked class privilege, not merely political, but industrial; and so he is the coming poet of labor. Some day, and that not so far off, the strongholds of class greed in Britain will be stormed, and when the liberated workers take up the task of making a new culture, they will learn that there was one inspired saint in their history who visioned that glad day, and gave up everything in life to bring it nearer. They will honor Shelley by making him their poet-laureate, and hailing him as the supreme glory of English letters.

## CHAPTER LIX

### THE STABLE-KEEPER'S SON

There is one more poet of this period with whom we must deal, and that is John Keats.

"And now you are going to have your hands full," says Mrs. Ogi. "Everyone is quite sure that Keats is

one poet who cannot possibly be accused of propaganda."

"Yes," says her husband; "an amusing illustration of the extent to which leisure-class criticism is able to take the guts out of art. Here is a man whose life and personality constitute one of the greatest pieces of radical propaganda in the history of English literature."

"At least the issue is fairly joined," says Mrs. Ogi. "Go to it!"

Let us first take the life and personality, and afterwards the writings. John Keats was the son of a stable-keeper; and if you don't know what that meant to British snobbery there is no way I can convey it to you. He did not attend a public school or a university; he did not learn to walk and talk like an English gentleman. He was a simple, crude fellow—a little chap not much over five feet high—and his social experiences early taught him the lesson of extreme reserve; he held himself aloof from everyone who might by any possibility spurn him because of his low estate. Even with Shelley he would not forget that he was dealing with the son of a baronet; everyone who surrounded Shelley was trying to get money from him, and so Keats despised them and stayed apart.

"He was of the skeptical, republican school," wrote one of his boyhood intimates. "A fault finder with everything established." And the first poem which he got up the courage to show was a sonnet upon the release of Leigh Hunt, who had been sent to prison for two years for writing an article denouncing the prince regent. This poem was published in Hunt's paper, the "Examiner," and the notorious editor became the friend and champion of this twenty-year-old poet.

Meantime Keats had been apprenticed to a surgeon, and became a dresser in a hospital. He was called an apothecary's apprentice; and so when he published "Endymion," the ruling-class critics of the day fell upon him. The insolence of a low-bred fellow, imagining that he could write a poem dealing with Greek mythology, the field above all others reserved to university culture! "Back to your shop, John," cried the "Quarterly Review," "back to plasters, pills and ointment boxes!"

You see, it was not a literary issue at all; it was a political and social issue. In "Blackwood's" appeared a ferocious article, denouncing not merely Keats, but the

whole "cockney school," as it was called; this including Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Lamb, Shelley and Keats. "Cockney" is the word by which the cultured gentry of England describe the vulgar populace of London, who drop their h's and talk about their "dyly pyper." The Tory reviewers were only incidentally men of letters; they were young country squires amusing themselves with radical-baiting, they were "athletes, outdoor men, sportsmen, salmon-fishers, deer-stalkers." They gathered at Ambrose's and drank strong Scotch whiskey, and sang a rollicking song of which the chorus ran: "Curse the people, blast the people, damn the lower orders." And when they attacked the "Cockney" poets, it was not merely because of their verses, but because of their clothing and their faces and even their complexions. "Pimply Hazlitt" was their phrase for the greatest essayist of their time; they alleged that both Hazlitt and Lamb drank gin—and gin was the drink for washerwomen.

Keats wrote "Endymion" at the age of twenty-one, and two years later he suffered a hemorrhage, which meant the permanent breaking of his health. He wrote his last lines at the age of twenty-four, and died early in his twenty-fifth year. So you see he had not long to win his way against these aristocratic rowdies. He was poor, and exquisitely sensitive; he suffered under such brutal attacks, but he went on, and did the best work he could, and said, very quietly: "I think I shall be among the English poets after my death." He realized the dignity of his calling, and in his letters made clear that he did not take the ivory tower attitude toward his art. "I am ambitious of doing the world some good," he wrote; "if I should be spared, that may be the work of future years." And in the course of his constant self-criticism and groping after new methods and new powers, he traveled far from the naive sensuousness of his early poems. His last work was a kind of prologue to "Hyperion," in which he discussed the poet and his function, and laid down the law that only those can climb to the higher altar of art

> to whom the miseries of the world
> Are misery and will not let them rest.

How Keats felt on the subject of the class struggle was startlingly indicated in the last days of his life.

Dying of consumption, he took a sea voyage to Italy, a journey which was a frightful strain upon him. He landed in Naples; and Naples, as we know, is warm and beautiful, a place for a poet to rest and dream in. But Keats would not dream; he smelt the foul atmosphere of royalist intrigue and tyranny, and would not stay. A friend took him to the theater, and he saw a gendarme standing on either side of the stage, and took that for a symbol of censorship and despotism, and would not sit out the performance!

He died in Rome, and after his death Shelley wrote "Adonais," a eulogy of Keats and an attack on his detractors. Little by little his fame began to spread, and everywhere it was recognized by the Tories as part of the class struggle of the time. Sir Walter Scott had been pained by the personal venom of Lockhart's attack in "Blackwood's"; but not enough to cause him to withdraw his subsidy from the magazine, nor to prevent his accepting Lockhart as his son-in-law and future biographer. A young Englishman of radical sympathies defended Keats, and a friend of Lockhart's intervened in the argument, and forced a duel with Keats' defender, and killed him. That is the way literary questions were settled in those days!

When you fight for the fame of Keats you are asserting the idea that genius is not a privilege of rank and wealth, but that the precious fire smoulders also among the masses of the people, so that a stable-keeper's son, self-taught, may become one of his country's greatest poets. Some critics would accept that doctrine now; but not all, it would appear. Here is Henry A. Beers, eminent scholar and professor of English literature in Yale University, writing in the Yale "Review," and saying: "There *was* something a little underbred about Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, and even perhaps about Keats."

So much for the man; now for the poetry. The first thing to be got clear is that it is *young* poetry; it was all written before the age of twenty-four. An ignorant boy, brought up in uncultured surroundings, gropes his way out into the beauty and splendor of art. He is enraptured, quivering with delight; nature to him is a perpetual ecstasy, and words are jewels out of which he makes ravishment for the senses. He has a marvelous gift of

language, splendor like a flood of moonlight flung out upon a mountain lake. He is in love, first with nature, then with a young lady of eighteen, whom he describes by the adjectives "stylish" and "ignorant"; nevertheless, he falls under her spell, and after he is dead the young lady says that the kindest thing people can do for him is to forget him. So little does a great poet's dream of feminine loveliness understand his true character and greatness! We may be sure that if Keats had lived to marry Fanny Brawne he would not have been happy, and would have realized only too quickly that love is not merely a thrill of young sensibility, a rapturous "Dream of St. Agnes," but a grave problem requiring for its solution both reason and conscience.

The early poetry of Keats represents that stage of simple, instinctive, unreflecting delight which we call by the name "Greek." He chose Greek themes and Greek imagery, and was never more Greek than when he tried to be medieval. But the most significant thing about his work is the quick maturing of it, even in those scant four years. A shadow of pain darkens his being, the pangs of frustrated love wring cries of anguish from him; and so we come to the second stage of the Greek spirit—the sense of fate, of cruelty hidden at the heart of life, the terror and despair of loveliness that knows it is doomed. Out of this mood came his greatest poems, the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the "Ode to a Nightingale," the "Ode to Melancholy." If anyone denies that this poet is trying to teach us something about life, if anyone thinks there is no message in this infinite mournfulness, he has indeed a feeble apprehension.

But let us, for the sake of argument, assume with the art for art's sakers that Keats was an esthete, and produced "pure beauty," unalloyed by any preaching. Would that mean that we had found some art which is not propaganda? Assuredly not; and those who besiege us with contentious examples—Keats, Gautier, Whistler, Hearn, etc.—simply show that they have not understood what we mean by the thesis that all art is propaganda. It is that, fundamentally, as an inescapable psychological fact; and it does not cease to be that just because the artist preaches enjoyment instead of effort.

Use your common sense upon the proposition. When

an artist takes the trouble to embody his emotions in an art form, he does so because he wishes to convey those emotions to other people; and insofar as he succeeds in doing that, he will change the emotions of the other people, and change their attitudes toward life and hence their actions. Is it not just as much "teaching" to proclaim the supremacy of the sensuous delights, as to proclaim the supremacy of reason, or of any system of reasoned thought? When an artist composes a song on the theme, "Let us eat, drink and be merry," is he not setting forth a doctrine of life? If not, why does he not go ahead and eat, drink and be merry? Why does he trouble to give advice to you and me? When Keats writes, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," it is perfectly plain that he is making propaganda—and false propaganda, since standards of beauty are matters of fashion, varying with every social change. He is making propaganda when he declares that

> "Beauty is truth, truth beauty"—that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Incidentally he is revealing to us that he has done very little thinking about either truth or beauty, but is content to use abstract words without meaning behind them.

I have made clear, I hope, that I consider the art of Keats an exquisitely beautiful art, fine and clean, and a perfectly proper art for any lad to produce between the ages of twenty and twenty-four. There is a stage of naïve trust in instinct through which youth passes, especially poetical youth. But when this stage is continued into maturity then it becomes something entirely different, neither fine, nor clean, nor beautiful; it becomes stale self-indulgence, empty-minded irresolution, dawdling decadence. All those things manifested themselves in the later periods of Greek art, and they may be observed in our own period of the breakdown of capitalism.

The Tory party came in the end to realize that there was nothing really dangerous in the poetry of this unhappy boy. Wise old Tories like Sir Walter Scott had known it from the beginning, and young Tories like Tennyson and Rossetti proclaimed it. Keats himself was no longer alive to offend them with his Cockney manners, so they took up his writings, and made them a bulwark

of leisure-class culture in a stage of arrested mentality, a resource of critics who wish to keep the young from thinking about dangerous modern questions. But I venture the opinion that if this Cockney stable-keeper's son had grown to manhood, he would have taken care of his own destiny, and seen to it that dilettanti idlers and aesthetic decadents should find no comfort in his name and example. His letters give abundant evidence of his capable mind, and assure us that if he had been blessed with health he would have matured into a thinker, even as John Milton, the great companion of his later days.

How much the lip-servers of Keats really understand him, was proven by a peculiar incident which befell me in my own youth. Twenty-two years ago I published "The Journal of Arthur Stirling," a passionate defense of the right of young poets to survive; and of course I sang enraptured praise of Keats, and made him a text for excited tirades. At that time there was a newspaper in New York called the "Evening Telegram," owned by James Gordon Bennett, a dissipated rowdy who might have been a blood brother to the Tory crowd which conducted "Blackwood's" and the "Quarterly" a hundred years ago. This "Evening Telegram" published a page of book reviews every Saturday, boasting it the most widely circulated book page in the United States. Its opinion, therefore, was of importance to a young writer hoping to live by his pen. It reviewed "The Journal of Arthur Stirling," saying that we might have sympathized with the struggles of an unfortunate poet, had he not committed the indiscretion of giving us samples of his writings, which enabled us to be certain that he had no idea whatever of poetry. For example, said the editor, here was one of Arthur Stirling's effusions. Read it:

> Sit thee by the ingle, when
> The sear faggot blazes bright,
> Spirit of a winter's night!—
> Sit thee there, and send abroad
> With a mind self-overaw'd
> Fancy, high-commission'd;—send her!
> She has vassals to attend her;
> She will bring, in spite of frost,
> Beauties that the earth hath lost;
> She will bring thee, all together,
> All delights of summer weather;
> All the buds and bells of May

From dewy sward or thorny spray;
All the heapèd Autumn's wealth,
With a still, mysterious stealth;
She will mix these pleasures up,
Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it!—

Poor Arthur Stirling was supposed to be dead, so I asked a friend to write to the editor of the "Evening Telegram" and point out to him that he had misunderstood the book; the lines quoted were not submitted as the work of Arthur Stirling, they happened to be the work of John Keats! The editor published this reply with an easy-going comment; it made a good joke, he said, but as a matter of fact he was justified in his criticism, because the lines belonged to the very early work of Keats, which was practically without poetic merit. My friend wrote again, expressing surprise that the editor should make such a statement; for this poem, entitled "Fancy," belonged to the last two years of Keats' life, the wonderful years which produced all his greatest writings. Palgrave, whose authority none would dispute, had included it in the "Golden Treasury," which contained only thirteen poems by Keats. The editor of the "Evening Telegram" was unable to find space for that letter!

## CHAPTER LX

### THE PREDATORY ARTIST

Says Mrs. Ogi: "Here is Haldeman-Julius, discussing the thesis of your book. He says: 'You may say that because Balzac drew his characters largely from the bourgeoisie he was conducting a subtle propaganda in behalf of a class; or, in general, that he was a bourgeois author. But such a view would be a travesty of literary criticism.'"

Says Ogi: "That is what a great many people are going to call this book. But let us see what we can make of Balzac."

At this point the mail arrives, and in it a letter to Mrs. Ogi, telling some bad news about a friend. A look of deep distress comes upon her face, and Ogi, watching her, is suddenly inspired. "Hold that expression!" he cries.

"What do you mean?" falters Mrs. Ogi.

"It's what I need for a story! I want to get all the details of it—the trembling of your lips, the look in your eyes. Hold it now! It is copy!"

"I think you are out of your mind," says Mrs. Ogi; and her face assumes a quite different expression.

Says her husband: "I am the artist, and I feed on life. My fellow humans suffer, and a voice within me cries: 'Magnificent!' Anguish writes itself upon their features, and I whisper: 'There is a great moment!' They are utterly abased, and I think: 'Here is my chance of immortality!' "

Says Mrs. Ogi: "You are a monster! I have always known it."

"I am one among thousands of monsters, ranging the earth, competing furiously for their prey. I explore the whole field of human experience; I climb the mountain peaks, I ransack the starry spaces, I rummage the dustbins of history, collecting great significant moments, climaxes of emotion, drama, suspense, thrill; when I find it, I slap my knee, like Thackeray writing the scene of Becky Sharp caught in adultery, and exclaiming: 'There is a stroke of genius!' I see tears falling, and I think: 'That will sell! Out of that cry of despair I shall make a feast! From this tale of tragedy I shall build a new house! Upon this heap of anguish I shall leap to fame! I shall enlarge my ego, expand in the admiration of my fellow-men, enjoying dominion over their emotions and their thoughts. Also, of course, I shall not forget my fellow-women, their thrills and ecstasies; I shall have gorgeous apartments, furnished with barbaric splendor, to which will come brilliant and fascinating admirers—"

Says Mrs. Ogi: "Is this a dream you want me to psychoanalyze?"

"No," says her husband, "it is simply the soul of Balzac which I am putting before you: the most perfect type of the predatory artist that has existed in human history; the art for art's sake ideal incarnate; genius divorced from conscience, save only as applied to the art work itself—the inexorable duty of portraying the utmost conceivable energy, fury, splendor, terror, sublimity, melodrama, pity, elegance, greed, horror, cruelty, anguish,

beauty, passion, worship, longing, wickedness, glory, frenzy, majesty and delight."

This predatory artist, living in a predatory world, and portraying predatory emotions, does not seem to us a propagandist, simply because of the complete identity which exists between him and the thing he portrays. It is the world which came into existence after the French revolution, and has prevailed ever since. The masses made the revolution, hoping to profit from it; but the merchants and bankers and lawyers took over the power. Alone, this class in France could not have succeeded; but they had the help of England—it is the triumph of British gold, taking charge of the continent and making it over in the image of the "shop-keeper": the bourgeois world, a society in which everybody seeks money, and having obtained it, spends it upon the getting of more money, or upon the expansion of his personality through the power of money to dominate and impress other men. Those who succeed enjoy, while those who fail are trampled; such is the "Comédie Humaine," as Balzac exhibits it in a total of eighty-five works of prose fiction, not counting dramas, essays and reviews.

He was born of a bourgeois family and educated for a lawyer. But he wanted to write, and because his family would not support him, he went away and starved most hideously in a garret. The hunger which he there acquired was not merely of the stomach and the senses, but of the intellect and soul. He became a ferocious, almost an insane worker. He was greedy for facts, and never forgot anything; he acquired a whole universe of detail, names, places, technical terms, the appearances of persons and things, human characteristics, anecdotes, conversations. He wove these into his stories, he constructed vast panoramas of French society, colossal processions marching past without end. The bulk of his work is so enormous that you may spend your lifetime reading Balzac, exploring the lives of his two or three thousand characters.

What will you know when you get through? You will know French bourgeois civilization, high and low, rich and poor, good and evil. You will observe the rich growing richer and the poor growing poorer; you will discover the greedy devouring the good and patient and

honest—and then coming to ruin through their own insensate desires. It is brilliant, vivid, as real as genius can make it, and at first you are enthralled. How marvelous, to learn about the world without the trouble of going into it! But after you have read for a month or two, another feeling steals over you, a feeling of familiarity: you know all this, why read any more? Life is odious and cruel, it makes you ill; your one thought becomes, can anything be done about it? Is there any remedy? And from that moment you are done with Balzac.

For, so far as this "Comédie Humaine" is concerned, there is no remedy. Balzac was so much a part of his own corrupt age that he could not have conceived of a co-operative world. He saw the class struggle, of course —and took his stand on the side of his money. A passionate Tory, he referred to "the two eternal truths, the monarchy and the Catholic church." His attitude to politics was summed up in the formula that the people must be kept "under the most powerful yoke possible." You find in his novels tremendous loads of philosophic and scientific learning, practically all of it utter trash. Henry James disposes of him in the sentence: "He was incapable of a lucid reflexion." The nearest approach to a definite proposition to be got out of his writings is the notion that desire, imagination and intellect are the destroyers of life. Of course, if that be true, civilization is doomed, and it is a waste of time to seek moral codes or understanding, or even to produce art.

Such a view was, of course, simply the reflex of the predatory artist's own greed for money, luxury, fame and power. He lived alternately for art and Mammon. He would shut himself up alone in a secret place and write for weeks, even months, without seeing anyone. He would start work at midnight, clad in a white Benedictine robe, with a black skull-cap, by the light of a dozen candles, and under the stimulus of many pots of coffee. Having thus completed a masterpiece, he would emerge to receive the applause of Paris, carrying a cane with an enormous jeweled head. Having made another fortune and paid a small part of what he called his "floating debt," he would plunge into the wholesale purchasing of silks and satins and velvets, furniture and carpets and tapestries and jewels and "objects of art," vast store-rooms

full of that junk whereby the bourgeois world sets forth the emptiness of its mind and the futility of its aims. Lacking money enough, his maniac imagination would evolve new schemes—book publishing, paper manufacturing, a journal, a secret society, silver mines in Sardinia, the buried treasure of Toussaint l'Ouverture, each of which he was sure was going to turn him into a millionaire overnight.

Balzac gives prominence to that type of men whom the French call "careerists"; that is to say, men who set out to make their fortune, at any cost of honor, decency and fair play. Balzac admired such men—for the simple reason that he himself was that kind. In his later years he met a wealthy Polish lady, Madame Hanska, who became his mistress; writing to his sister about it, he set forth what this meant to him, and his language was such as a "confidence man" would use, writing to a woman confederate. The alliance, he wrote, would give him access to the great world, and "opportunity for domination."

Is the work of such a man propaganda? If you accept the common dogma that blind egotistical instinct, and the portrayal and glorification thereof, constitute art, while the effort to understand life, and to reconstruct it into a thing of order and sense and dignity, is propaganda —why then undoubtedly the "Comédie Humaine" of Honoré de Balzac is pure and unadulterated art. If, on the other hand, you admit my contention that a man who is born into a money-ravenous world, and who absorbs its poisoned atmosphere, and sets himself to the task of portraying it, not merely as real and inevitable, but as glorious, magnificent, fascinating, sublime—if you admit with me that such a man is a propagandist, why then you must reconcile yourself to enduring the opposition of all orthodox literary critics.

## CHAPTER LXI

### THE OLD COMMUNARD

Victor Hugo was born in 1802, three years later than Balzac. He grew up in the same world, but was not satisfied to contemplate its diseases; he sought remedies, and became a convert to revolutionary ideals, and so all critics

agree that his work is marred by propaganda. He lived to be eighty-three years old, and went on writing and working to the very end, so that the story of his life carries us through practically the whole of the nineteenth century. We shall follow it, and then come back and retrace parts of the same story in the lives of other artists, French, German, British and American.

Hugo's father was a revolutionary soldier who rose to be a general in Napoleon's army. As a little boy the poet followed the armies from place to place in Switzerland, Italy and Spain. His mother was a Royalist, and the boy had an old Catholic priest for a tutor, and was taught the old dogmas, literary as well as religious and political. His conversion into a revolutionist was not completed until the age of forty-six. Having been brought about by contact with daily events, this conversion was of tremendous influence upon the thought of Europe.

He was a child of genius, and his prodigious activity began early. We find him composing a tragedy at the age of fourteen, and at the age of seventeen publishing a journal with the title of the "Literary Conservator." He gets married upon a pension of a thousand francs, conferred upon him by King Louis XVIII, who has been put upon the throne to preserve Catholic reaction. Then comes King Charles X, who makes him a knight of the Legion of Honor at the age of twenty-three. But gradually the young poet's "throne and altar stuff" begins to shown signs of independent thought; he composes a play in which Richelieu is portrayed as master of his king, and this is considered unsuitable for such ticklish times; the censor bars it, and the young poet's personal intercession with the king does not avail.

All this time, you understand, French art is still under the sway of the so-called "classical" ideals of Voltaire and Racine; tragic dramatists have to obey the "three unities," or they cannot get produced. But by 1830 the French people are sick of reaction, and ready to make their revolution again. As part of the change comes a surge of "romanticism" in the arts. Shakespeare is played in Paris for the first time; and Victor Hugo publishes a drama on the theme of Cromwell, with a preface in which he commits the blasphemy of declaring that Racine is "not a dramatist"! In the midst of the new

revolution he produces a romantic play, "Hernani," dealing with a revolutionary Spaniard of the Byronic type, who declaims all over the stage and dies sublimely.

The production of this play resulted in one continuous riot for forty-five nights. The leading lady protested, the hired claque revolted; so Victor Hugo called for help to the young artists of the studios, and they poured out of Montmartre and took possession of the theater. In those days the first purpose of romantic youth was to "shock the bourgeois" by strange costumes. Here was Théophile Gautier, nineteen years old, with long locks hanging over his shoulders, a scarlet satin waistcoat, pale sea-green trousers seamed with black, and a gray overcoat lined with green satin. Night after night the rival factions shouted and raged as long as the play lasted. All this in order to gain for dramatists the right to show more than one scene in a play, and more than twenty-four hours of their hero's life!

Victor Hugo also wrote fiction and prose, and in every field he became the new sun of France. But he was not content with literary laurels; he went on seeking a remedy for the bourgeois disease. He espoused the cause of a poor workingman, who, having been tortured in prison, had killed the governor of the prison. The young poet came upon a novel remedy—to sow the Bible all over France. "Let there be a Bible in every peasant's hut." Here in America the Gideonites have tried out the idea, sowing a Bible in every hotel room—but for some reason there are more crimes of violence in the United States than ever before in any civilized country!

The revolution of 1830 brought in a new king, Louis-Philippe, the ideal bourgeois monarch, an amiable gentleman who stayed at home with his wife and let the bankers and business men run the country. This king made Victor Hugo into a peer of France. But there was a new revolutionary outburst preparing, and in 1848 the bourgeois king was dethroned, and Victor Hugo was elected deputy to the new parliament, styling himself a "moderate Republican." The French people at this time were in the same position as the American people at present; that is, they believed what they were told, and were ready to accept any tinseled circus-performer as a statesman. They chose for their president a wretched

creature who happened to be a nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, and promised a return of all the old glories of France.

It took only a year of his government for Victor Hugo to realize that the one hope for progress lay in the program of the radicals. His two grown sons were thrown into jail for editing a paper attacking the policies of Louis Napoleon; and the father espoused the ideas of the old revolution, "the rights of man." Egged on by the terrified financiers, Louis Napoleon overthrew the parliament and had himself made emperor. Victor Hugo sought to rouse the people, barricades were raised in the streets, and hundreds were shot down with cannon. The poet with great difficulty made his escape to Brussels, from which city he denounced the usurper—"Napoleon the Little" as he called him—with the result that the Catholic government of Belgium passed a law expelling him.

He fled to the channel island of Jersey, where he wrote a book of poems called "The Chastisements," one of the most terrific pieces of denunciation in all the world's literature. Shortly after this the bourgeois government of England combined with the bourgeois government of France to drive Russia out of the Crimea; there was a great war, and the people of Jersey objected to the poet's attacks on the French emperor; they mobbed his home, and he had to flee to the neighboring island of Guernsey, where he settled down to the true task of a great artist, to reform the world by changing the ideals of the coming generations. For nineteen years he stayed in exile, until "Napoleon the Little" brought himself to ruin, and his country along with him. In the meantime Victor Hugo had published several volumes of marvelous poetry, and finally, after ten years' labor, his masterpiece of fiction, "Les Misérables," which appeared simultaneously in eight capitals of the world, and brought its author the sum of four hundred thousand francs.

Into this novel Hugo poured all his passionate devotion to liberty, equality and fraternity; likewise his blazing hatred of cruelty and tyranny. He tells the story of an escaped convict who reforms and makes a success of his life, but is pursued by the police and dragged back to prison. Incidentally the poet gives us a vast picture

of the France of his own time, and the lives and struggles of the proletariat. The figure of Jean Valjean is one of the great achievements of the human imagination, and his story is a treasure of the revolutionary movement in every modern land.

"Napoleon the Little" led his country to war with Germany and was overwhelmingly crushed. Hugo came home in this crisis, and took part in the defense of Paris. Then came the terrible uprising of the starved and tortured masses, the Paris Commune. By this time the bourgeois savages had machine-guns, so that they could wipe out wholesale the idealism and faith of the people; they stood some fifty thousand workers, men, women and children, against the walls of Paris and shot them down in cold blood. Victor Hugo defended these Communards, and once more had to flee for his life.

After the peace with Germany, France was left a republic, and her great poet returned to live with his grandchildren, to labor for the working classes, and to pour out floods of eloquence in behalf of his social ideals. New movements arose, and the old man heard that he was theatrical, bombastic, unreal. All that is true to a considerable extent; for Hugo is like Shelley, having the defects of his great qualities. When the inspiration does not come to him, he learns to imitate it; he acquires mannerisms, he adopts poses. Following Milton's suggestion of making an art work of his life, he sets his personality up as an embodiment of revolutionary idealism, he makes himself into a legend, a living monument, a literary shrine, one might say a literary cathedral. It is only a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, and we often take that step with Victor Hugo. But the masses of the people knew that the core of his being was a passionate devotion to liberty and justice; therefore they took him to their hearts, and his life is so blended with theirs that Victor Hugo and revolutionary France are two phrases with one meaning.

## CHAPTER LXII

### TYGER, TYGER!

What would Victor Hugo have been if he had had no social conscience? What would the romantic movement have amounted to if it had confined itself to the field of art? These questions are answered for us by Théophile Gautier.

We have seen him at the age of nineteen taking part in the battle of "Hernani" in his scarlet satin waistcoat; we see him at the same age leading the art students in mocking dances about a bust of Racine in a public square of Paris. After that we see him for forty-two years diligently following the art for art's sake formula. He declares that he has no religion, no politics; he has no concern with any moral or intellectual question, he is purely and simply an artist, devoting himself with passionate fervor to the production of works of pure beauty. His fastidiousness is shown by the law he lays down, that a young artist should write not less than fifty thousand verses for practice before he writes one verse to be published.

And what is the content of this art? Gautier believes in one thing, the human body. He believes in it, not as an instrument of the mind, a house of the spirit, but as a thing in itself, to be fed and pampered and perfumed, and clad in silks and satins, and taken out to engage in sexual adventures. The pretensions of art for art's sake turn out to be buncombe; the reality of the matter is art for orgy's sake.

At the age of twenty-four Gautier published a novel, "Mademoiselle de Maupin," which might be described as Shakespeare's "As You Like It" rewritten by the devil. A young lady of beauty and fashion goes wandering in the costume of a man, and this affords endless possibilities of sexual titillation; women fall in love with her, thinking she is a man, and men fall in love with her by instinct, as it were; the orgies thus postponed are especially thrilling when they finally occur.

Some men have written this kind of depravity at twenty-four, and learned something better as they grew older; but Gautier learned absolutely nothing. To the

end of his long life he continued to produce novels and tales of which the sole purpose is to glorify the orgy, to make it romantic and thrilling by the elaborate squandering of wealth, the heaping mountain high of the apparatus of luxury. The device fails, for the simple reason that the senses are limited. When you are hungry a dinner interests you, but ten thousand dinners appall; and the same thing applies to coition. The men and women in these orgies remind us of people in a besieged castle, living in deadly terror of an enemy who never fails to get them in the end. The French have made a word for that victorious enemy: *ennui.*

It should hardly need to be said that the art of Théophile Gautier is a leisure-class art. These orgies are possible only in a slave civilization; they presuppose the fact that the masses shall toil to heap up wealth for a privileged few to destroy in a night of riot. At the very opening of "Mademoiselle de Maupin" the author portrays his hero, living at ease with a valet to serve him, and nothing to do but be discontented. "My idle passions growl dully in my heart, and prey upon themselves for lack of other food." He is consumed with imaginings—all, needless to say, having to do with pleasures which he does not mean to earn. "I wait for the heavens to open, and an angel to descend with a revelation to me, for a revolution to break out and a throne to be given me, for one of Raphael's virgins to leave the canvas and come to embrace me, for relations, whom I do not possess, to die and leave me what will enable me to sail my fancy on a river of gold," etc.

His dream finally takes the form of a woman, and he spends many pages in detailing her qualities. Needless to say, she belongs to the rioting classes. "I consider beauty a diamond which should be mounted and set in gold. I cannot imagine a beautiful woman without a carriage, horses, serving-men, and all that belongs to an income of a hundred thousand a year; there is harmony between beauty and wealth." Of course this dream-woman must be entirely subject to the sensual desires of man. "I consider woman, after the manner of the ancients, as a beautiful slave designed for our pleasure."

Victor Hugo was exiled by Louis Napoleon; while Gautier, having "no political opinions," remained in Paris

and accepted financial favors from the tyrant. What he considered his master work was published at the age of forty-five, a volume of verse whose title explains its character, "Enamels and Cameos." The art of poetry has become identical with that of the goldsmith; words are tiny jewels, fitted together with precise and meticulous care. Words have beauty, quite apart from their meaning, and the proper study for mankind is the dictionary. Poetry should have neither feeling nor ideas; while as for the subject, the more unlikely and unsuitable it is, the greater the triumph of the poet. This is not an effort to caricature Gautier's doctrine, it is his own statement, the theme of one of his poems. But on no account are you to take this poem for propaganda!

You see how the proposition demonstrates its own absurdity. Théophile Gautier was during his entire lifetime a fanatical preacher, a propagandist of sensuality and materialism, a glorified barber and tailor, a publicity man for the Association of Merchants of Tapestries, Furniture and Jewelry. When he writes a poem on the subject of a rose-colored dress, he asks you to believe that he is really interested in the rose-colored dress, but you may be sure that he is no such fool; he writes about the rose-colored dress as an act of social defiance. He says: There are imbeciles in the world who believe in religion, in moral sense, in virtue, self-restraint and idealism, subjects which bore me to extinction; in order to show my contempt for such imbeciles, I proceed to prove that the greatest poem in the world can be written on a rose-colored dress or on a roof, or on my watch, or on smoke, or on whatever unlikely subject crosses my mind; I consecrate myself to this task, I become a moral antimoralist, a propagandist of no-propaganda.

What are the products of nature bearing most resemblance to enamels and cameos? They are certain kinds of insects, beautiful, hard, shiny, brilliantly colored, repulsive, cruel, and poisonous. Such is the art of Théophile Gautier and his successors, who have made French literature a curse for a hundred years. This literature possesses prestige because of its perfection of form; therefore it is important to get clear in our minds the fact that the ability to fit words together in intricate patterns is a thing ranking very low in the scale of human faculties.

The feats of the art-for-art-sakers are precisely as important as those of the man on the stage who balances three billiard-balls on the end of his nose. The piano-gymnast who leaped to world fame by his ability to wiggle his fingers more rapidly than any other living man has been definitely put out of date by the mechanical piano-player; and some day mankind will adopt a universal language, and forget all the enamels and cameos in the old useless tongues.

Get it clear in your mind that external beauty is entirely compatible with deadly cruelty of intellect and spirit. A tiger is a marvelous product, from the esthetic point of view, and offers a superb theme to poets, as William Blake has shown us. "Tyger, tyger, burning bright"—but who wants this gold-striped glory in his garden? In exactly the same way, there is a mass of what is called literature, possessing the graces of form—music and glamor, elegance, passion, energy—and using all these virtues, precisely as the tiger uses his teeth and claws, to rend and destroy human life. Literary criticism which fails to take account of such vicious qualities in art works is just exactly as sensible and trustworthy as the merchant who would sell you a *cobra de capello,* with a gorgeous black and white striped hood, for a boudoir ornament and pet.

## CHAPTER LXIII

### THE CHILD OF HIS AGE

The middle of the nineteenth century was a hard time for generous-minded and idealistic poets in France. The great revolution had failed, it failed again in 1830 and in 1848, and cruelty and greed and corruption seemed to be the final destiny of civilization. A few strong spirits kept the faith, but the weaker ones drifted away and drowned their sorrows in debauchery and drink.

Alfred de Musset was one of these latter, a beautiful and charming youth, gifted with all the graces of life and with the magic fire of genius. He has told his own sad story in a book, "The Confessions of a Child of His Age." Most of the strong and healthy men of France had been killed off in the Napoleonic wars, and the new

generation were the children of weaklings. They drifted aimlessly, having luxury but no duties, and no vision or ideal to inspire them.

Musset was born in 1810, of a well-to-do and cultured family. He was impressionable, sensitive, and in the beginning plunged with ardor into the poetical movement headed by Hugo. But soon he lost interest, and gave himself to amorous adventures and to mournful self-pity, an elegant young Byron of the boulevards. It was a time when a poet could make a national reputation by comparing the moon above a church-steeple to a dot on the letter i. Musset, from the beginning to the end of his short life, had no experience of any sort except sexuality, alcohol, and the poetry of men who likewise had no other experience.

At the age of twenty-three he met George Sand, a woman of thirty who had run away from her family and was supporting herself as a free-lance novelist. She carried the young poet off to Italy, but their dream of love broke up in a quarrel, and poor Musset had brain fever, and came home, and sat all day in his room for four months, so his brother tells us, doing nothing but crying, except when he played chess. But at the end of the four months he went out and found another love, and then another and another. Any woman would do, according to his philosophy, poetically set forth in an exquisite verse: "What matters the flagon, provided one is drunk?"

The young poet was welcomed to the French Academy, but was not very faithful to his duties. Said one of the members: "Musset absents himself too much." To which the answer was: "Musset absinthes himself too much." He was an old roué at the age of thirty, and there was nothing left but to die. Long afterwards George Sand published a novel in which she told the intimate details of their love affair; and that, of course, was fine copy, and a tremendous thrill. The title of the novel was "She and He," and Musset's brother came back with a book entitled "He and She." It appears that George Sand had been unfaithful to Musset in the midst of their amour; but we cannot get up much sympathy for the unhappy "child of his age." His brother delicately tells us how, in the days of his beautiful youth,

lying in bed at night, the young poet would impart shy confidences about his amorous triumphs. He was seducing other men's wives and daughters and sisters, and was apparently not concerning himself with any brain fevers these men might have, or with any tears of grief they might shed in between their games of chess.

Two of the most beautiful and eloquent of Musset's poems are entitled, respectively, "A Night of May" and "A Night of December." Each of them portrays the poet as falling sorrowfully out of love. The world had naturally assumed that the two poems related to the same mistress; but the poet's brother revealed that the two poems had a different "motive," and also that there was another "motive" in between the May "motive" and the December "motive." And there were many other "motives"—since numbers of elegant ladies in Paris aspired to become the theme of one of the "Nights" of this delicate if drunken genius. We shall see a long string of poets of this sort for a hundred years in France—and some, alas! in England and America. The lesson of their lives is always the same—that poetry without social vision and moral backbone is merely a snare for the human spirit.

## CHAPTER LXIV

### PRAYER IN ADULTERY

The problem of the relationship of art to morality is most interestingly illustrated by the case of George Sand. This woman-writer was promiscuous, and she was predatory, in the sense that she turned her adventures into copy and sold them in the market. But she had a mind, and she used it to investigate all the new ideas of her time. She was moved, not merely by her own desire for pleasure, but by the sufferings and strivings of her fellow human beings. She poured all these things into her books, and made herself one of the civilizing forces of her time.

She was born in 1804 and raised in a convent. Married at the age of eighteen, and being unhappy, she kicked over the traces and became a Bohemian adventurer, wearing trousers, proclaiming the rights of passion, taking to herself one conspicuous lover after another, and then

putting them into books for the support of herself and her two children. She was the founder of what we might call emotional feminism. She was religious in a sentimental way, though a vigorous anti-clerical; she became converted to Socialism, worked ardently for social reform, and published many long novels in its support.

George Sand had a romantic ancestry, of which she did not fail to make literary use. On her father's side she was descended from a royal bastard. Her mother had been a camp follower in the army of Napoleon, "a child of the old pavements of Paris." Thus the novelist united in one person the aristocratic and the proletarian impulses. A large percentage of her collected ancestors were illegitimate, so she came honestly by her free love ideas. On the other hand, she was a very respectable, hard-working bourgeois woman, who preached interminably on virtue, and paid all her debts, and got good prices for her manuscripts—things which were regarded as extremely bad taste by the art-world of her time.

France had had innumerable aristocratic ladies who had loved promiscuously, proceeding from a king to a duke, and from a duke to an abbé or a monseigneur. There had been women who had risen from the lower classes by becoming the mistresses of noblemen. But here was a brand-new phenomenon, a woman who went out and faced the world "on her own," and instead of taking the money of the men she loved, proceeded to earn the money by writing about the men! It was an enormous scandal, and at the same time an enormous literary success, for these were pot-boilers of genius, full of eloquence and fire. Also they were full of ideas on a hundred subjects, elementary instruction such as ladies on the women's pages of our Sunday supplements give to correspondents. But American readers find it a little hard to understand the fusion of piety and sexuality which George Sand pours into her romantic novels. "Oh, my dear Octave," writes an adulterous wife to her lover, "never shall we pass a night together without kneeling and praying for Jacques!" It is just a little shocking to us to learn that this Jacques is the husband whom the pair are deceiving!

George Sand lived like a healthy bourgeoise to the age of seventy-two; in her later years she retired to the

country, and the fires of free love died, and she wrote novels about the peasants in her neighborhood. They are very human and simple, and make standard reading for French courses in American high schools. It is interesting to compare them with the old-style handling of the peasants in French art. Gone are the fancy pictures of beautiful young shepherds and shepherdesses in silks and satins and high-heeled slippers. Now for the first time a French artist finds it worth while to go out among the working people of the fields, and observe the external details of their lives, and at least try to imagine their feelings. We note the same thing happening also in pictorial art; instead of the elegancies of Fragonard, we now have a peasant painter, Millet, peasant born and peasant reared, making real pictures full of real proletarian feeling. That much as least the revolution has accomplished!

## CHAPTER LXV

### MAIN STREET IN FRANCE

"Eighteen years ago," says Ogi, "a lanky, red-headed youth from Minnesota ran away from Yale University and showed up at Helicon Hall to stoke our furnace. We were never entirely sure about the furnace, but we could always count upon lively arguments on the literary side of our four-sided fireplace. Now this youth has grown up and added a new phrase to the American language—"

"'Main Street' or 'Babbitt'?" says Mrs. Ogi.

"Recall the story of 'Main Street.' A young girl marries a doctor and lives with him in one of the desolate, cultureless villages of the Northwest. The novel is a long one, and the method that of minute detail; we learn everything about the little place and the people in it, their empty, sordid lives, the utter absence of vision. The girl is lonely and restless, she craves something beautiful and inspiring. She has luxurious tastes, and chafes at having to economize. She meets a handsome, attractive young man, and after many agonies of soul she takes him as her lover. In the end he leaves her; and after being heart-broken for a while she takes another lover. He

also deserts her, and she is ill, in debt, and finally takes poison, and her husband, the doctor, dies of grief—"

"Hold on," says Mrs. Ogi, "you must have been reading a sequel to 'Main Street.' I don't remember any of those things happening. Carol Kennicott thought she loved the other man, but she didn't deceive her husband, she held herself back—"

"It is another of my poor jokes," says Ogi. "This is not the story of 'Main Street,' but of a famous French classic, 'Madame Bovary' by Gustave Flaubert. You see, the themes of the two novels are identical, and so is the method; the difference lies in the temperaments of two races. The young man from Sauk Centre and the young man from Rouen alike call themselves "realists"; but one proceeds upon the assumption that it is possible to restrain passion, and on the whole, better to try, while the other proceeds upon the assumption that it is impossible to restrain passion, and that if you pretend to do it, you are a Puritan, and what is worse, a hypocrite. So at the end of Carol Kennicott's story we find her still trying to introduce a little light into Gopher Prairie, while Emma Bovary is dead and the town of Yonville-l'Abbaye is exactly what it was before."

Flaubert is by many considered the greatest of all realists. He made his religion out of a theory of style; and he was absolutely certain that "Madame Bovary" was the final product of the "objective" method. He had coldly observed reality, and no predisposition had been allowed to interfere. My purpose in mixing him up with Main Street, Gopher Prairie, Minn., is to bring out the contention that "Madame Bovary" is as subjective as a lyric; from first to last an expression of its author's personal, or shall we say racial conviction, that the sexual impulse dominates the lives of men and women. The great classic of realism is a legal brief, in which every detail has been carefully selected and arranged, and every sentence composed for the purpose of proving this argument. We have once more the old Greek tragedy with its lurking Nemesis; only this time the lurking-place is in the genital glands.

Flaubert was born in 1821, so that he was a youngster to the group of writers we have been considering: Balzac, Hugo, Gautier, George Sand. He was a tall, lanky, pro-

vincial fellow, with drooping mustaches, looking like a dragoon. He was epileptic and hysterical, and suffered agonies of melancholy, for the most part over problems of style. He would pace the floor all night in torment seeking for a missing word; he records that he spent eight unhappy days in avoiding one dissonance. The action of all his life which he repented most was a phrase in "Madame Bovary." Translated literally, this phrase is "a crown of flowers of orange-tree"; the unforgivable sin lying in the two "ofs."

We are told that Flaubert originated a formula of art which Gautier cherished all the rest of his life: "The form is the parent of the idea." In other words, you first think of a beautiful way to say something, and then you think of something to say which can be said in that way. It would be impossible for art perversity to go farther; and you have only to consider "Madame Bovary" to realize how little Flaubert followed his own theory. He did not first think of a prose work in two parts, the first part having nine chapters and the second part fifteen; what he thought of was the French formula, locating the seat of Nemesis in the genital glands. The secret of his masterpiece is the fact that he chose to illustrate this formula by means of characters which he knew intimately and loved with all the power of his instinctive being. That is the real basis of the greatness of "Madame Bovary"; the fact that with all her faults and all her follies her creator loved her, and believed in her, and made her real in every breath she drew and in every word she uttered. The important idea which he put across is that we are all of us, good or bad, wise or foolish, stupid or clever, passengers on the same ship of life, tossed by the same storms, and bound for the same unknown harbor.

That is the propaganda which makes the greatness of every work of realism, if it has greatness. And so we can understand the failure of this unhappy genius in his other writings. He went back to ancient Carthage, and following his rigid art theories, he laboriously accumulated knowledge of detail, and wrote what he meant to be another masterpiece of realism, "Salammbô." He creates for us a whole gallery of Carthaginian characters; but he doesn't know these characters, he doesn't love them,

he doesn't make us know them or love them—and his would-be masterpiece is therefore as lifeless as any gallery of wax works. We read it with curiosity because of the historical detail, the pictures of a far-off and cruel civilization; but we seldom finish it, and we forget everything but what a history-book might have given us.

## CHAPTER LXVI

### THE MATTRESS GRAVE

We have paid a long visit to France, and must now cross the Rhine and see what is happening in Germany. It is interesting to note that the two artists whom we are about to study are men who had to flee from Germany and spend a considerable part of their lives as political exiles in Paris.

Heinrich Heine was born in 1799, the same year as Balzac. He was a Jew, and it was a time when the Jews in Frankfort were penned up in a filthy ghetto and subjected to insults and outrages; the "Jew-grief" was one of the deep elements of this great poet's soul. Another element was the shame of the "poor relation"; he had a rich uncle, a millionaire banker in the bourgeois city of Hamburg, who took the youthful genius into his office at the age of nineteen, and soon afterwards kicked him out, telling him that he was "a fool." Among other follies, the young genius had fallen in love with the rich banker's daughter, and she toyed with him for a while, and then married respectably, and gave the poet's heart a wound from which it never recovered.

To get rid of him the uncle set him to studying law; but he made a poor student and a worse lawyer. In order to be allowed to practice he had to be baptized as a Christian; this doesn't really do one any harm, but it caused shame to Heine throughout his life. He had no real religion, being a child of Voltaire, a rebel, and in due course a revolutionist. He was a poet, a maker of exquisite verses, full of unutterable tenderness. Also he was a lover; he wandered here and there with his broken heart, trying many casual loves, and paying for his adventures a frightful penalty, as will appear.

We are back in the days of the "Holy Alliance," and all the little princelings of Germany are holding the thoughts of their subjects in a vise. Heine put satirical and skeptical ideas into rhyme; he had a bitter wit, and his words flew all over Germany, and the Hohenzollerns of Prussia not merely suppressed one book, they paid him the compliment of prohibiting everything he might write. "Put a sword on my coffin," he said, in one of his stanzas, "for I have been a soldier in the war for the liberation of humanity." The revolution of 1830 came in France, and Heine was deeply stirred, and hoped for something to happen in Germany. But he had to wait a long time, nearly a hundred years; then, strange whim of history, three million American boys had to cross the ocean to win the political battle of this German-Jewish rebel!

Heine could stand Germany no longer, and went to live in Paris, where he was welcomed by the whole romantic school. He wrote letters, articles and verses, which went back to Germany and helped carry on the war for freedom. His genius and wit were such that all the efforts to bar his books only promoted their circulation. Fate played a queer prank upon the Prussian Junkerdom—their most popular sentimental songs, which they know by heart and sing on all possible occasions, were written by a rebel exile whom they had chased about the streets in a Judenhetze; the same man who wrote the terrible stanzas of "The Silesian Weavers," picturing the starving wretches sitting in their huts and weaving a three-fold curse, against God, King and Fatherland—"Old Germany, we weave thy shroud—we weave, we weave!"

His was a strange, complex nature, with many contradictory qualities. He was called "the German Aristophanes." He met in the end a ghastly fate; a spinal disease, the penalty of his casual loves, slowly ate him up, and for years he lay on what he called " a mattress grave." First he could scarcely walk, then he could scarcely see, and all the time he suffered hideously. But his mind lasted to the end, and he saw all things clearly, including his own grim fate. "The Great Author of the Universe, the Aristophanes of Heaven, wished to show the petty, earthly, so-called German Aristophanes that

his mightiest sarcasms are but feeble banter compared with His, and how immeasurably He excels me in humor and in colossal wit."

## CHAPTER LXVII

### SIEGFRIED-BAKUNIN

In my interpretation of artists so far I have had to rely, for better or for worse, upon myself; no one else, so far as I know, has analyzed art works from the point of view of revolutionary economics.

"Tolstoi?" suggests Mrs. Ogi.

"Tolstoi considered them from the point of view of Christian primitivism, a quite different thing. But now at last I have help; the economic interpretation of Richard Wagner has been done by Bernard Shaw in a little book, 'The Perfect Wagnerite,' published more than twenty-five years ago. So I feel like a small boy taking shelter from his enemies behind the back of his big brother."

"If you would talk like that more frequently," says Mrs. Ogi, "you wouldn't have so many enemies!"

Richard Wagner was a towering genius, a master of half a dozen arts, perhaps the greatest compeller of emotion that has ever lived. He invented a new art-form, the "music-drama," in which the arts of the musician, the poet, the dramatist, the actor, the scene-painter, and the costumer are brought together and fused into a new thing, "the music of the future." It is a terrific engine for the evocation and intensification of human feelings; in creating it, and forcing its recognition by the world, Wagner performed a Titan's task.

He was born in 1813, which made him thirty-five years of age when the revolution of 1848 drove King Louis Philippe from the throne of France and sent an impulse of revolt all over Europe. Wagner at this time was the conductor of the Royal Opera House at Dresden, having a life position with a good salary and a pension. Previous to that time he had had a ghastly struggle with poverty; a young and unknown genius, he had almost starved to death in a garret in Paris. He had married an actress, who had no understanding whatever of his power, but who had starved with him, and now clung

with frenzy to security. He himself had the full consciousness of his destiny as an artist; he had already written three great operas, and had sketched his later works. He had thus every reason in the world to protect his future, and to shelter himself behind the art for art's sake formula.

Instead of which, he attended a meeting of a revolutionary society of Dresden, and delivered an address appealing to the king of Saxony—the royal personage whose servant and pensioner he was—to establish universal suffrage, to abolish the aristocracy and the standing army, and to constitute a republic with His Majesty as president. Needless to say, His Majesty did not follow this recommendation from his operatic conductor; and next year the people of Dresden rose, and built barricades in the streets, and Wagner joined the revolutionists and actively took part in organizing their forces. When the Prussian troops marched in and put down the insurrection, three men were proscribed in a royal proclamation as "politically dangerous persons," and condemned to death. One was Roeckel, assistant conductor of the opera house, who was captured and spent the next twelve years in a dungeon; another was Michael Bakunin, who became the founder of the Anarchist movement; and the third was Richard Wagner, royal operatic conductor.

Germany's greatest living genius spent his next twelve years as a political exile in France and Switzerland. He utilized the time, in part to pour out political pamphlets, and in part to embody his revolutionary view of life in his greatest art work. Those who are interested in the pamphlets may find extracts in "The Cry for Justice." Here is a sample from a manifesto entitled "Revolution," published in the Dresden "Volksblaetter":

> Arise, then, ye people of the earth, arise, ye sorrow-stricken and oppressed. Ye, also, who vainly struggle to clothe the inner desolation of your hearts with the transient glory of riches, arise! Come and follow in my track with the joyful crowd, for I know not how to make distinction between those who follow me. There are but two peoples from henceforth on earth—the one which follows me, and the one which resists me. The one I will lead to happiness, but the other I will crush in my progress. For I am the Revolution, I am the new creating force. I am the divinity which discerns all life, which embraces, revives, and rewards.

The art work in which Wagner embodied these revolutionary ideas is known as "The Ring of the Nibelung." It consists of four long operas, based upon the old German mythology. It begins with a charming fairy story and ends with a grim tragedy; and from first to last it is a study of the effects of economic power upon human life.

In the depths of the river dwell the Rhine-maidens, having a lump of gold which they admire because it shines, but for which they have no other use. An ugly little dwarf pursues them; and when he cannot get their love, he decides to get along with their gold. He steals it, and makes from it a magic ring, which represents the ability to build cities and palaces, to command luxury and pleasure—to be, in short, our present master class. Even the gods are seduced by this lure, and fall to quarreling and intriguing for the magic power of gold. The god Wotan wrests it from the dwarf Alberich; and the latter puts a curse upon it, to the effect that it can only be worn by those who have renounced love—which is just as you see it in our modern world, and just as Wagner saw it when he was a court servant in Dresden, and was driven mad by the insolence of hereditary privilege.

There are two giants, who represent our great captains of industry, and have built Wotan a palace known as Walhalla. The giants have been promised Wotan's sister, the goddess of youthful beauty and goodness, as their pay for this labor; but they elect to take the ring instead. This is Wagner's way of telling us his opinion of the great bankers and gentlemen of wealth whom he vainly besought to assist him in the production of his beautiful works of art.

There were no factories in old German mythology; but the scene shows us a cavern down in the bowels of the earth, where Alberich, by the power of his ring, compels all his fellow dwarfs to toil at making treasures for him. We see him wielding the lash, and the music snarls and whines, and it is precisely the atmosphere you find in every sweat-shop and cotton mill and coal mine under our blessed competitive system. And when we see one of the giants slay his brother, and carry off the ring, and turn himself into a dragon, to sit upon it and guard it for the balance of time, we know that Wagner has

visited the millionaire clubs of Dresden, and seen the fat old plutocrats in their big leather arm-chairs.

Wotan, the old god, see too late the ruin he has brought into the world; he decides that the only way of escape is to create a hero who shall slay the dragon of privilege and break the spell of economic might. This hero is the young Siegfried, the child of nature who knows no fear; Bernard Shaw says that he is Wagner's young Anarchist associate, Bakunin. And note that in this Siegfried myth Wagner foreshadows the downfall not only of capitalism, but also of religion. The last of the four operas is called "The Twilight of the Gods," and the two evil spells of gold and of superstition are broken by the strong arm and the clear mind of a human youth.

Wagner wrote the words of these four operas immediately after the Dresden revolution; the poem was privately published four years after his flight from the city. During the years of his exile he affords us a sublime example of a great man contending with obstacles for the sake of an ideal. He went ahead to compose his masterpiece in the face of poverty and debt, ridicule and ignominy. His works were absolutely new, they required an absolutely new method of presentation; so, even when he could get a chance of production, he had to face the stupidity and malice of singers and conductors and managers, who were sure in their own conceit and resented instructions from an upstart.

We find him in 1860, almost at the end of his exile, receiving from Louis Napoleon an opportunity to put on "Tannhäuser" in Paris. Now this opera is a music sermon in reprehension of sensual love; it portrays the ruin and ultimate repentance of a medieval knight who is lured into the Venusburg, the lurking place of the old heathen goddess. And this Sunday school lesson in music was to be presented in the great opera house, whose boxes were rented by members of the Jockey Club, the gilded youth of Paris who supported the opera in order to provide publicity for their mistresses in the ballet!

The clash was embittered by the fact that the members of the Jockey Club came late from their supper-parties, and wanted to see their mistresses dance; therefore it was an iron-clad law of the opera that the

ballet came in the second act. But in Wagner's Sunday school lesson the knight is lured into the Venusburg in the first act, and the composer stubbornly refused to change his story. Therefore the young gentlemen of the Jockey Club yelled and hooted and blew penny-whistles all through the performance, and kept that up night after night. They even took the trouble to come on Sunday to make sure of breaking up Wagner's show.

It would be pleasant to have to record that this hero of the social revolution stood by his guns until the end of his life; but alas, he weakened, and sold out completely to the enemy. Bernard Shaw excuses him on the ground that the social revolution was not yet ready, and that the revolutionists were impractical men. But I say that it was Wagner's task to help make the social revolution ready, and to train the revolutionists by setting them an example of probity. Instead of that, he decided that the establishing of his own reputation was more important than the salvation of society. He accepted amnesty from the Saxon king, and came back and made himself into a great captain of the music industry, and a national and patriotic hero.

He became the intimate friend and pensioner of the king of Bavaria; and for this king he wrote a highly confidential paper entitled "Of the State and Religion," wherein he explained that he had once been a Socialist, but he now saw that the masses were gross and dull, incapable of high achievement. The problem was to get them to serve ends which they did not understand; they must be deceived, they must have illusions. The first mass-illusion was patriotism; they must be taught to reverence their king. The second mass-illusion was religion; they must believe they were obeying the will of God. The difficulty of government lay in the fact that the ruling class must see the truth, they could not believe either in the State or in God. For them there must be the higher illusions of the Wagnerian art. Needless to say, for this secret service King Ludwig paid generously, and we find Wagner spending his pension—I cite one item, three hundred yards of satin of thirteen carefully specified colors, at a cost of three thousand florins!

He had craved luxury all his life, and in the end he got it—not merely silks and satins and velvets, for which

he had a sort of insanity, but all kinds of splendor and homage, with kings and emperors to attend the opening performances of his operas. When the Franco-Prussian war breaks out we find our Siegfried-Bakunin drinking the cup of military glory and pouring out a "Kaiser-march"; we find him stooping to an operatic libretto in which he casts odium upon all the genius of France, not sparing even Victor Hugo. He reads Schopenhauer, and decides that he is a pessimist, and has always been a pessimist, and he tries to reinterpret his revolutionary "Ring" accordingly. He composes a religious festival play, a mixture of Christian mysticism and Buddhist fatalism, called "Parsival," which made the fortune of his Bayreuth enterprise, a play-house built out of funds subscribed by his admirers.

Wagner lived to old age, full of honors, and left a widow and a son, poetically named Siegfried. The widow died recently, but the son still survives, to bask in his father's glory, and to gather in the shekels of the music pilgrims. It is possible to appreciate to the full the sublimity of the revolutionary Wagner without paying reverence to this family institution which he has left behind, or for the hordes of "Schwaermer" who come to eat sausages and drink beer and revel in emotions which they have no idea of applying to life. Is there anything in all the tragedies imagined by Richard Wagner more tragic than the fate which has befallen the young Siegfried-Bakunin—whose prestige and tradition are now the financial mainstay of the White Terror in Germany, the Jew-baiting, Communist-shooting mob of the "Hakenkreutzler," or Bavarian Fascisti?

## CHAPTER LXVIII

### THE GOSPEL OF SILENCE

Ogi has been wandering about the cave with a discontented expression on his face, showing a disposition to growl at whatever gets in his way. Mrs. Ogi, whose job is to notice domestic weather-signs, inquires: "What is the matter with you?"

Says Ogi: "I have to write an uninteresting chapter."

"Why don't you skip it?"

"I can't, because it deals with an interesting man." As she cannot guess that riddle, he goes on to complain: "If only I had been writing this book twenty-five years ago, when I thought 'Sartor Resartus' the most delightful book ever penned! But I went on, and got an overdose of Carlyle. I read almost all that Gospel of Silence in forty volumes; and now I sit and ask: what did I learn from it? Some facts, of course: history and biography. But did I get a single valid idea, one sound conclusion about life?"

"Explain it quickly, and pass on," says Mrs. Ogi.

"I explain the human race, blocked from the future by a sheet-steel door. We need the acetylene torch of spiritual fervor; also we need the engineering brain, to say: "Put it here, and here, and cut the hinges." In the face of this task, some of the wielders of the torch go off and get drunk. Others fall down on their knees and pray. Others forbid us to touch the door, because God made it and it is His will. Others write noble verses with perfect rhymes, to the effect that man is born to trouble, and great art teaches us to endure discomfort with dignity. Others take fire with zeal, and proceed to butt the door down with their heads. They butt and butt, until their heads ache. I realize how undignified it is to describe a great master of English prose as a 'sore-head'; yet there happens to be no other word in the language that so tells the story of Thomas Carlyle."

He was the son of a carpenter in Scotland, and suffered from poverty and neglect, and through a long life from indigestion. He complained pathetically that Emerson ate pie and was well, while he ate plain oatmeal and was miserable. He was irritable, and hard to get along with—we are privileged to know about this, because both he and his wife wrote endless letters to their friends, detailing their domestic troubles, and these letters are published in many volumes, and we can read both sides and take our choice. Tennyson refused assent to the proposition that the Carlyles should have married elsewhere; because then there would have been four miserable people instead of two.

Carlyle made himself, and also his literary style; he was a hack writer, biographer and translator, and struggled along with a dissatisfied young wife in a lonely

country cottage. "Sartor Resartus" was written at the age of thirty-five, and sketches the philosophy of an imaginary German professor, whose name translated means "Devil's Dung"; this professor's philosophy being based upon the discovery that everything in civilization is merely clothes, the outside of things, the shams and pretensions and conventions. It is funny to imagine our statesmen and diplomats and prominent society personages stripped, not merely of their medals and ribbons, but also of their shirts and trousers; very few of them would look imposing—and the same applies to civilization with its proprieties, moralities and religions. This work of uproarious mischief fell absolutely flat in well-dressed and well-mannered England, and Emerson and a few people in far-off Boston had to inform the British cultured classes that they had a new prophet among them.

The teaching of "Sartor Resartus" is entirely negative; and when you ask what Carlyle had to contribute to constructive thinking about our hateful social system, the answer is: nonsense. He saw the evils, and scolded at them—and scolded equally hard at the forces which are to remedy the evils. Carlyle had contempt for the people, out of whose lap he had sprung; he despised democracy and the whole machinery of popular consent. He repaid America for discovering him by ridiculing the Union cause; he denounced the reform bill of 1867 as "Shooting Niagara."

Carlyle's way to set the world right is revealed to us in a book called "Hero-Worship." First we have to find the Great Man; and then we have to obey him. "Obedience is the primary duty of man"—meaning, of course, the man like you and me, who is spelled with a little m. The one who is spelled with a capital letter is the Autocrat, who makes us do what we ought to do. "A nation that has not been governed by so-called tyrants never came to much in the world."

Our Great Tyrant sets us all hard at work. He makes us build houses and cultivate farms—but no machinery or railroads, because these constitute Industrialism, which is a Mammon-Monster. If we do our work by machinery we have leisure, and that is dangerous; we must have Work, and then more Work, our one safe Deliverance

from Devil-Mischief—you see how one picks up the style of the "Gospel of Silence"!

Having got the houses built, what next? Why then, to save us from the Idleness-Imp we set to work knocking the houses down with cannon-balls. I don't mean that Carlyle always advocated war; what he did was to glorify systems of government which historically have resulted and psychologically must result in war. At the age of fifty-eight, having surveyed the whole of history, our Scotch hero-worshipper selected the greatest of human heroes to become the subject of a grand state biography in six volumes: and whom do you suppose this hero turns out to be? Frederick of Prussia, who stole Silesia from his cousin, and seized Poland and divided it up among Austria, Russia and himself; Jonathan Wild the Great, founder of the Hohenzollern Heroism, and great-great-grandfather of our World War!

I dutifully read those six large volumes, and studied the series of charts in which the strategy of Frederick's military campaigns is set forth. I learned a fascinating parlor game, which consists in moving here and there little black and white oblongs representing regiments and brigades and divisions and other military formations of human beings. The white oblongs represent your own human beings, and the black oblongs represent the human beings you propose to destroy; you pound them to pieces with artillery, you sweep them with volleys of musketry, you charge them with cavalry and chop them with sabres—and then you move up other oblongs, called reserves, and continue the procedure. It is safer to play this game on paper, because when you get through, you can throw the paper into the waste-basket, and do not have some tens of thousands of dead and mutilated men and horses decaying all over your back yard.

A pitiful ending for a Prophet and Preacher who aspires to the Remaking of Mankind in Capital Letters! Just a poor, bewildered old dotard, dyspeptic and crotchety, helpless and blundering, aspiring to a certain end and working to the opposite end.

"But why should anyone consider such a man great?" asks Mrs. Ogi.

"I have been trying to formulate that to myself. It is because he had the grace to be unhappy about our

modern world. He did not get drunk on moonshine; he did not tell himself that God was going to do what it was obviously the business of men to do. He didn't persuade himself that Evolution was going to do it, or that Time was going to do it, or that Faith was going to do it. He didn't prattle about one increasing purpose running through the ages, or about one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves. He didn't decide to dream his dream and hold it true, or to have moments when he felt he could not die. He didn't tell us that Love will conquer at the last, or that his faith was large in Time—"

"This appears to be a transition," says Mrs. Ogi.

"Precisely. We are about to begin a new chapter: The Lullaby Laureate, or Queen Victoria's Super-Soothing Syrup."

## CHAPTER LXIX

### THE LULLABY LAUREATE

The story of my own soul is the story of Alfred Tennyson's reputation for the last thirty or forty years; so that is the easiest way for me to tell about it.

I was one of Tennyson's cultural products. I cannot recall the age when I did not know "Call me early, mother dear," and "What does little birdie say?" As soon as I had the idea of being anything, I had the idea of being Sir Galahad. I attended very devoutly a church, which differed from that of Alfred Tennyson in one fact—that it had a prayer for the President of the United States in place of a prayer for the Queen. I doubt if it ever occurred to me to think that Tennyson might be wrong in anything—until the age of fifteen, when suddenly there dawned upon my horrified mind the idea that Christianity was merely another mythology.

I wrestled with this idea for a couple of years, and part of the struggle consisted of a study of "In Memoriam," recommended by my spiritual adviser. The poem suggested a great many new reasons for doubting the immortality of the soul; but it suggested no certainty that the Creator of the universe, having given me one life, was under obligation to give me two. Which meant

that I was through with Tennyson, whose whole product, on its religious side, is an agonized cry that immortality must be.

In politics and economics I experienced a similar revulsion from my one-time idol. He seemed to me a victim of all the delusions, a celebrator of all the shams of civilization. Even his poetical charms now annoyed me, serving as trimming and decoration for second-rate ideas. In my reaction I went too far, as have all the young people of our time; for Tennyson was really a great poet, and a man of fine and generous spirit.

He was the son of a Church of England clergyman, and that is a fact which must never be forgotten; he grew up in a rectory, and wrote Sunday poetry. He was the elder brother of a big family, and took the position of elder brother to all mankind. He was tall and imposing, dark and romantic looking, cultivating long wavy black locks and a Spanish cloak and a poet's pipe. When he did not know anything to say, he puffed at his pipe and looked magnificent, and everybody was awed.

Culture came naturally in his family. He had written five thousand octosyllabic rhymes at the age of twelve. His first verses were published when he was young, and because one or two critics made fun of them, he took refuge in his dignity and waited nine years to publish again. "Ulysses" made his fame when he was thirty-three, and two years later he received a pension from the Tory government. Two years after that came "The Princess," a dramatic composition in ridicule of the higher education of women; it suited the lower-educated Victorian ladies so perfectly that it ran into five editions. In 1850, at the age of forty-one, Tennyson became the laureate; when he was seventy-four he was raised to the peerage. No other English poet has earned this honor, which is reserved to wholesale slaughterers of animals and men, to brewers, whiskey distillers, diamond merchants, and publishers of capitalist dope.

Concerning Lord Tennyson as an artist in words, there is little that needs to be said. He received his "ten talents" and put them to use; everywhere he went he carefully collected poetical impressions, words, phrases and ideas, and jotted them down. No one ever spent

more time filing and perfecting, and no one was more completely master of beautiful utterance.

He had an inquiring mind, and picked up ideas on all subjects and put them into his poetry; but unfortunately he found consecutive thinking very difficult, and you can find as many contradictory thoughts in him as in the Bible. He has an invincible repugnance to the drawing of uncomfortable conclusions; whenever his thinking leads to such, he evaporates in a cloud of comforting words. His verse contains more platitudes and cheap cheer-up stuff than any other poet known to me; and so he was the darling of the antimacassar age.

England had put down Napoleon and taken possession of the trade of the world. There were revolutions on the continent, but at home nothing worse than a few rioters to be clubbed by the police. The foggy islands were a safe haven, administered by landlords and merchants. Everything was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, and the function of a poet was to tell it to the people, in such beautiful language that they would accept it as a revelation.

Tennyson in his early days had shown traces of liberalism, but the Chartist movement frightened him into reaction, and there he stayed. "Shout for England!" says the chorus of one of his poems, and the function of the shout in suppressing thought is understood by all students of mob psychology. "Riflemen, form!" exhorted another poem, published in the "Times"—

> Let your reforms for a moment go;
> Look to your butts, and take good aim.

That was, so to speak, a "Timesly" sentiment; the riflemen hastened to form, and the young aristocrats led them to slaughter, and the poet laureate had to come forward again to glorify the British national habit of blundering. "The Charge of the Light Brigade" was so popular in its day that it was printed on picture post cards; every school child learned the duty of the lower classes under the Tory system—

> Theirs not to make reply,
> Theirs not to question why,
> Theirs but to do and die.

Bear in mind that the factory system was now in full flower, and little children ten and twelve years old were slaving all night in cotton mills, or dragging heavy cars in the depths of coal mines. English manufacturers and landlords were taxing the lower classes to such a condition that today, when you see them pouring out for their holidays upon Hampstead Heath, they seem not human beings, but some lower species, shambling and deformed. Once in a while a gleam of this horror breaks into Tennyson's verse; but even then the message is reactionary—an English gentleman is scolding at commercialism because it destroys the good old country life.

But for the most part the Victorian way of dealing with uncomfortable things was to hush them up. Poetry must select pure and sweet subjects; poetry must be polite, it must use big words and preserve the home comforts. It is our duty to believe what is proper, even when it is obviously not true.

I have referred to Tennyson's long agony on the subject of immortality. The deepest experience of his life was the death of his friend, Arthur Hallam, a man who apparently knew how to think, and to drive the dreamy poet to work. It is puzzling to us that a grown man should be so taken aback by death; it would seem to be a common enough phenomenon to be noted and prepared for. But Tennyson was struck down mentally and spiritually, and his sufferings make clear to us that he did not really believe his creed. Men who are seriously convinced of heaven don't mind waiting a few years to join their loved ones; but Tennyson was never really sure that he would see Arthur Hallam again, and he spent seventeen years brooding over this problem, and putting his broodings into "In Memoriam."

The poet early fell in love with a young English lady, but could not afford to marry her; so he waited twenty years, and she waited also. Now there have been poets who married when they fell in love, and went off and kept house in a garret or a cottage, and made out the best they could. But Tennyson had to have his poet's robe and his poet's chair in front of the fireplace; he had to be an English gentleman, and to keep his wife like an English lady in the days of Victorian propriety. The lady, when they were finally united, put an end to fretting

over immortality; she explained to her husband that "doubt is devil-born"—and what gentleman wants a devil in his home? It is better to become an oracle: to preach about peace in a far future, and meantime wield a sword in the Crimea; to sing about justice, and vote the Tory ticket; to have all the comforts that fine phrases can bring, without sacrificing those other comforts of popularity and prosperity.

Tennyson went back to the old days of Britain, and falsified the story of King Arthur so as to make it sweetly sentimental. "Obedience is the bond of rule," he wrote; and so Queen Victoria's husband came to call on him. He preached submission to womanhood: "Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me"—and so he was summoned to Windsor Castle to kiss the sweet hand of his queen. One thinks of the sweet hands of those English ladies who took up hatchets and chopped the pictures in the National Gallery!

Victoria's beloved husband died, and Tennyson wrote an ode to him; so he became the dear pudgy old lady's intimate friend, and she confided to him the troubles of royalty. "How I wish you could suggest means of crushing those horrible publications, whose object is to promulgate scandal and calumny, which they invent themselves!" The poet did his best; his most popular sentimental and patriotic stuff was published in pamphlets which sold for thrippence; but in spite of everything the labor movement continued to take root, and likewise Socialism—or "Utopian idiocy," to use the Tennysonian phrase.

He sits upon his throne, eighty years of age and more, and hardly anyone questions his supremacy; he is the greatest English poet since Shakespeare, there is no living writer to be compared to him. We pity him, for after all, he is a great man, and has written great verse—"Ulysses," for example, of which no one could ever wish to change a line. He has written lyrics of beauty and real eloquence. But now he sees the younger generation traveling another road from his, and he wonders and fears and storms and scolds. He is too clear-sighted not to see the wreck of his dreams—

> Poor old voice of eighty crying after voices that have fled!

He looks about and sees modern capitalism—

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?

It was no common Victorian who saw that at the age of eighty; and no fair critic will deny him credit for such lines. But the elderly poet-lord had no idea what to do about it, and capitalist society continued to nourish its secret disease, which twenty-two years after Tennyson's death was to cover the whole earth with vomit.

## CHAPTER LXX

### HIGH-BROW SOCIETY

There was another poet who grew up in this unpromising Victorian England. His father and grandfather were bank officials, and he had a comfortable income. In his youth he was a dandy, with lemon-colored gloves and flowing poetical locks; he turned into a leading clubman and a prominent diner-out. He believed in the Church of England, and in those social conventions which guide the lives of English gentlemen; he refused to permit his wife to have anything to do with George Sand's Bohemian set, and when she tried to investigate spiritualism he broke up the show.

And yet he managed to be a great and open-minded poet, and in many ways a revolutionary force. He had in him a core of sound instinct, a healthy belief in life and a trust in his own intellect. He fell in love with a lady poet by the name of Elizabeth Barrett, who was an invalid, kept in a kind of prison of duty by a tyrannical old father. The poet did not wait twenty years for her; he persuaded her to slip around the corner and marry him—a dreadful scandal in the polite world of England.

When I was a lad we did not have the word "high-brow"; its place was filled by the word "Browning." Learned ladies and gentlemen had formed a "Browning Society," and held solemn meetings in which they tried to find out what these poems were about. Apparently the task proved a difficult one, for they are at it still.

Now a poet may be obscure because he has something to say which is very profound; but there is little of that kind of obscurity in Robert Browning. When you

decipher his message, it turns out to be something quite obvious, like the immortality of the soul, or the rights of love, or the fact that human motives are mixed. The cause of the obscurity is that the poet has invented a perverse way of telling these things; he likes to play around the outside of a subject, approach it from a dozen different angles, and set you the task of piecing the thing together from hints and glimpses.

He is an enormously learned person, and has rummaged in a thousand old dust-bins of history, and acquired a million details of names and places and things; he pays you the generally quite undeserved compliment of assuming that you know all this as well as he does. If he wishes to tell you about some unknown musician in the court of some obscure Renaissance ruler, he will begin by talking about a ring this musician used to wear, and the first dozen lines of the poem will depend upon an ancient Greek legend concerning the stone that is in the ring. If you don't know the legend about the stone in the ring of the musician in the court of the Renaissance ruler, why then the opening of the poem has no meaning to you, and the Browning Society might hold a hundred sessions on the subject without making head or tail of it. Such writing is simply a bad joke; it is one of the many forms of leisure-class art perversions.

When Browning chooses to write real poetry, he can make it just as simple and as melodious as Tennyson's, and far more passionate. He invented a new and fascinating poetical form, the dramatic lyric, or dramatic soliloquy. He will take some strange and complicated character, whom he has picked up in the junk-rooms of the past, and let this character start to talk and reveal himself to you—not merely the things he wants you to know, but the things he is trying to hide from you, and which he lets slip between the lines. Thus we have Mr. Sludge, the spiritualist medium, who would have converted Mrs. Browning if the poet had not kicked him out of the house. Thus we have Bishop Blougram, an elegant and thoroughly modern Catholic prelate, discussing with an intimate friend over the wine and cigars the delicate question of how he justifies himself for feeding base superstition to the people, who want it and can't get along without it

Browning knew how to be direct, when his feelings were deeply enough stirred. He was direct when he dealt with the old poet Wordsworth and his apostasy from the cause of freedom. Anyone can understand the title, "The Lost Leader," and the opening lines:

> Just for a handful of silver he left us,
> Just for a riband to stick in his coat.

Likewise, when the Brownings went to Italy and took fire at the struggle of the Italian people for freedom, everybody understood the poetry they wrote home; even the Austrian police understood it, for they opened Browning's mail, to his furious indignation. Likewise, when Mrs. Browning died and some persons proposed to write her biography without her husband's permission, the husband was able to make known his opposition. He spoke of "the paws of these blackguards in my bowels," and said he would "stop the scamp's knavery along with his breath."

For his master-work, to which he devoted his later years, Browning made a peculiar selection. It was a time when democracy was breaking into the world of culture, in spite of all the opposition of academic authority. We shall find poets and novelists in every country persisting in dealing with vulgar reality, instead of with mythological demigods and romantic conquerors. Browning went for his story to an old scandal pamphlet he picked up in a second-hand bookshop of Florence. He might as well have picked up a scrap of a Hearst newspaper from the gutter, for it dealt with a sensational murder story, what is called a "crime of passion." An elderly merchant in Rome had killed his wife, and at his trial he proved that she had run away with a young priest. The priest maintained that the elopement had been a chaste one; he was trying to save the girl from the cruelty of her husband.

Browning, in telling the story, adopts the ultra-modern device of the open forum: all sides shall have a hearing. In "The Ring and the Book" you read nine long narratives of the same events. You hear Half Rome, which sides with the husband; then you hear the Other Half Rome, which sides with the wife. You hear the husband, the wife, the young priest, the lawyers for each side, and the pope, rendering judgment. When you get through

with all this reading you have learned several important lessons: you have learned that life is a complicated thing, and truth very difficult to arrive at; you have learned that good and evil live side by side in the same human heart; you have learned to think for yourself, and not to believe everything you hear; finally, you have learned that the most sordid human events offer a potential literary masterpiece—requiring only a man of genius to penetrate the hearts of the persons involved!

## CHAPTER LXXI

### OFFICIAL PESSIMISM

In this writer's youth, when he was struggling to earn a living in New York, there was one magazine which was open to new ideas, the "Independent." Its literary editor was Paul Elmer More, and he gave me a chance to write book reviews for him—and then, alas! decided that he could find other people whose writing he preferred. Mr. More evolved into a critic, and has published I don't know how many volumes of what he calls the "Shelburne Essays." Up to a few years ago, when Professor Sherman made his appearance, I used to say that More was the one literary conservative in America who was not intellectually contemptible; the one man who combined scholarship with a perfectly definite and consistent point of view, no sentimentality, and no water-tight compartments in his brain.

In the third volume of the "Shelburne Essays" Mr. More has one dealing with Byron's "Don Juan." I smile when I reflect with what contempt Mr. More would greet the proposition that he should read a modern writer as slangy, as licentious, and as popular as Byron! But "Don Juan" was written a hundred years ago; so it is a "classic," and Mr. More greets its author as the last of the great pessimists, one who had the wit to recognize the futility of human life, and the courage to speak his conclusions plainly.

Things have changed since Byron's day, Mr. More explains. "We, who have approached the consummation of the world's hope, know that happiness and peace and the fulfilment of desires are about to settle down and

brood for ever more over the lot of mankind." This, I had better explain, is sarcasm on Mr. More's part. He is irritated because modern scientific people have presumed to think that human problems can be solved. He is so much irritated that he turns his essay on Byron into a series of sneers at "the new dispensation of official optimism." For example, this kind of thing:

> Next year, or the next, some divine invention shall come which will prove this melancholy of the poets to have been only a childish ignorance of man's sublimer destiny; some discovery of a new element more wonderful than radium will render the ancient brooding over human feebleness a matter of laughter and astonishment; some acceptance of the larger brotherhood of the race will wipe away all tears and bring down upon earth the fair dream of heaven, a reality and a possession forever; some new philosophy of the soul will convert the old poems of conflict into meaningless fables, stale and unprofitable.

What is the meaning of this attitude of envenomed resentment at the idea of a hope for mankind? We shall note it again and again among the poets and critics of the ancient regime—of what we may call "the old dispensation of official pessimism." It used to puzzle me that scholars and thinkers should be so malicious and perverted as to find pleasure in trampling upon human aspiration; but after years of pondering I think I understand it. These gentlemen are guests at a banquet, who, seeing the food too long delayed, and despairing of anything better, have filled their bellies with husks and straw; and now, when they are full, and can no longer eat, they see the good food coming to the table!

It was a perfectly natural thing for an ancient to be pessimistic. He saw the world as a place of blind cruelty, the battle-ground of forces which he did not understand; and what guarantee could he have that the feeble intellect of man would ever tame these giants? So he made for himself a philosophy of stern resignation, and an art of beautiful but mournful despair. The scholars and lovers of old things have identified themselves and their reputations with these ancient dignities and renunciations, these tender and touching griefs; and how shall they express their irritation when bumptious youth arises, and proceeds to take charge of life, to abolish pestilence and famine, poverty, war, crime—and perhaps, in the end, even old age and death?

All this is preliminary to the introduction of another Victorian poet; one who moved me deeply in my youth, and still holds my undimmed affection. I would choose Matthew Arnold as the perfect exemplar of the "classical" attitude toward life; that is, resignation, at once pathetic and heroic, to the pitiful fate of mankind on earth. Listen to him at his best:

> Ah, love, let us be true
> To one another! for the world, which seems
> To lie before us like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful, so new,
> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
> And we are here as on a darkling plain
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night.

The author of these lines was the son of a great teacher, and therefore had no money. He spent thirty years of his life as an inspector of schools; a most pitiful destiny for a poet—traveling all over England to hear little children recite the list of the kings and the counties, and tell the number of legs on a spider. The fountain of his poetry dried up, and he became a critic, not merely of English letters but of English life; in many ways the most radical and most intelligent critic that Victorian England had. He preached the gospel of sweetness and light; also, alas, he went on the war-path against an infamous bill which was being agitated in Parliament, to permit a man to violate the old Mosaic code by marrying the sister of his deceased wife!

Matthew Arnold insisted that it wasn't on account of Moses, but on account of a thing he called "delicacy." You cannot travel in Victorian England without encountering phenomena like this. You will be introduced to what appears to you a perfectly sane and self-contained and cultivated gentleman, wearing exactly the correct frock-coat and tie; but then, you will happen to touch one of his tribal taboos, and suddenly he will shriek, and tear off his shirt, and pull out a sharp knife, and begin to slash himself, and dance and whirl in a holy frenzy.

—Ogi, wishing to make sure about this point, goes to the source of all information on the subject of refinement in sex matters. "Tell me," he says, "if you were to die,

would it be indelicate of me to marry one of your younger sisters?"

Mrs. Ogi, who has never read the Mosaic code, and is not learned in the Victorian lunacies, looks at her husband with a puzzled expression. "I helped to raise my sisters," she says. "Surely any wife would want to leave her husband in safe hands!"

## CHAPTER LXXII

### GOD SAVE THE PEOPLE

In the first half of this nineteenth century the British factory system came to maturity; the capitalist class took charge of society, and forced the working class into a condition of degradation hitherto unknown upon this planet. The class struggle took definite shape—Chartist agitations and suffrage reform bills and Corn Law riots—and there arose in England a man of genius to tell about the wrongs of the people from his own first-hand experience.

His father was a wretchedly paid government clerk, who had no acquaintance with the birth control movement. Charles Dickens was one of eight half-starved children, and went to work at the age of ten in a filthy, ramshackle blacking factory. The cruelties he there experienced stamped his soul for life, and helped to make the radical movement of the English-speaking world.

Later on he got a chance to go to school, and became a court stenographer and newspaper reporter, and saw the insides of ruling-class rascality. He began writing humorous sketches which turned into the "Pickwick Papers," and so at the age of twenty-four he was carried up into a golden cloud of glory. World fame and success were his for the balance of his life; but he never entirely forgot the meaning of his early days, and remained to some extent an apostle of the poor and oppressed.

When I say that Dickens is radical propaganda, I do not mean merely that he wrote novel after novel exposing the abuses of his time, the cruelties of the poor laws, the horrors of the debtors' prisons, the delays and corruptions of the courts, the knaveries and imbecilities of politics. I do not mean merely that he hated by instinct and ridi-

culed all through his life, lawyers and judges and newspaper editors and preachers and priests of capitalist prosperity. I mean something more deep and more fundamental than that: I mean that the very selection of his themes and of his characters, the whole environment and atmosphere of his novels, is a piece of propaganda. For Dickens proceeds to force into the aristocratic and exclusive realms of art the revolutionary notion that the poor and degraded are equally as interesting as the rich and respectable. We are invited, not merely to laugh at the antics of illiterate and unrefined people, as in Shakespeare; we are invited to enter into their hearts and minds, to put ourselves in their place and actually live their experiences. As reward for so doing, we are offered treasures of laughter and tears and thrills.

I don't know how it is nowadays, but in my boyhood, which was some twenty years after Dickens' death, everybody read him—my rich relatives, who read nothing else, and my poor relatives, broken-down Southern aristocrats, who read nothing else except the life of Robert E. Lee. And then in New York, the people I met in boarding-houses and third-rate lodgings—all shuddered over Bill Sykes and wept over Paul Dombey and laughed over Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller.

Dickens was, and remained to the end, from the point of view of leisure-class culture, a quite vulgar person. He took a naive delight in his worldly triumphs, and counted the success of his books by sales and money. He was a born actor, and loved to shine before the public; devising dramatic readings of his works, and taking endless tours, both in England and America, gathering great sums of money—though of course not to be compared with the moving picture fortunes of our day. It was a time when audiences liked to shed tears out loud, and Dickens liked to join them; he has all the tremolo stops in his organ, and piles on sentiment until we shudder. Fastidious and literary persons have now made it fashionable to declare that Dickens is unreadable; but the people have read him, and his sentiment as well as his humor are a part of our racial heritage, and one of the fountain-heads of the Socialist movement. His books are a five million word reiteration of the old Chartist hymn—

When wilt thou save the people?
O God of mercy! when?
Not kings and lords, but nations!
Not thrones and crowns, but men!

Dickens himself was entirely instinctive in his class feelings; his mind was a typical middle-class muddle, and his remedy for the ills he pictured was kindness and poor law reform and charity bazaars—hanging paper garlands about the neck of the tiger of capitalism. The British masses needed time in which to find out how to bind and destroy this beast; but the first service was to proclaim the fact that this capitalist world is a world impossible for sensitive and decent human beings to endure—a world in which justice has become the Circumlocution Office, and truth has become Thomas Gradgrind, and Christianity has become Mr. Pecksniff and Uriah Heep.

## CHAPTER LXXIII

## THE COLLECTOR OF SNOBS

Emerson, commenting upon the old saying that "No man is a hero to his valet," put the question: "What hero ever had a valet?" This goes to prove that Emerson was not a reader of popular fiction; for if he had been following the novels of William Makepeace Thackeray in "Fraser's Magazine," he would have known that it is impossible for any hero to be without a valet. In Dickens we enter into the lives of the poor, and in Thackeray we enter into the lives of the rich, and it is hard for us to decide which class has the greater claim to our pity.

Thackeray was born in India, his father being a government official. They tried to educate him at Cambridge, but it didn't take, because he was incorrigibly desultory, a big, good-natured fellow who loved eating and drinking and gambling and good fellowship—everything, in short, but hard work. He early lost his fortune, trying to publish a paper; then he had to work, and became a contributor to "Punch," and developed a faculty for burlesque verses and satiric sketches.

In my youth there was general complaint that Thackeray was "a cynic." Let us settle that question at the outset; he was one of the most sentimental souls that ever

walked about the world in trousers. But he had a pair of eyes, and he saw in the fashionable society around him a hundred different varieties of snobs; he collected them into a "Book of Snobs"—each one like a butterfly stuck on a pin. He went on to write a series of novels, full of scoldings varied by ridicule of human vanity and folly.

His first great work remains entirely neglected by the critics. "Barry Lyndon" is a marvelous piece of sustained irony, the story of a capable scoundrel, who makes his way in the great world by being just a little sharper than the people he meets, and a little more honest with himself. You recall how Milton, a devout and orthodox Puritan, could not refrain from making Satan heroic, because Satan was a rebel and Milton was another. We notice the same phenomenon in this case of Barry Lyndon, who does every kind of rascal thing; yet the fact remains, he is living by his wits, he is surviving in a world of privilege and power, and Thackeray is secretly thrilled by him. That doubtless accounts for the unpopularity of the story; for the average novel reader likes to have his villains labeled, and not to mix his blacks and his whites.

The instinctive rebel in Thackeray shows himself still more plainly in "Vanity Fair." This time the villain is Becky Sharp, an utterly heartless intriguer, selling her sex for money and power. Nevertheless, she is a woman "on her own," a little tiger-cat backed into a corner, with all the world poking sticks at her; she fights back, and gets the best of her enemies, and Thackeray cannot help making her the most interesting figure in the book.

As a respectable Victorian sentimentalist, he did his best to provide us with a foil for Becky, giving us Amelia Sedley, the perfect, submissive, adoring female. The daughter of a wealthy merchant, Amelia has never had a moment's discomfort in her life. She is a model of the Victorian virtues; she honors and serves the male members of her family, no matter how selfish and worthless they may be. She has the brains of a medium-sized rabbit, and after we have got to know her, we understand why Victorian gentlemen sought refuge in interesting mistresses.

It has been said that in Thackeray's novels all the good people are fools and all the evil people are clever. Beatrix Esmond, the one woman who rivals Becky Sharp in in-

terest, is a cold, proud beauty, without even Becky's excuse of poverty; she schemes to marry a duke, and when he is killed in a duel, she seeks to become the mistress of a prince, and ends ignominously as the wife of a tutor and the widow of a bishop. The Anti-Socialist Union of Great Britain, which exists to fight the "Reds," should begin its labors by excluding from all libraries these devastating pictures of the manners and morals of the ruling classes.

I do not mean by this that Thackeray was consciously a Socialist; quite the contrary. As a member of the ruling classes, he pleads with them to be worthy of their high and agreeable destiny. How completely he believed in the "gentleman" you can see by the treatment he gives to his hero, Pendennis, a perfectly worthless young idler, and to Major Pendennis, a cynical and depraved old rascal. Thackeray condones the former and loves and pities the latter, and expects us to weep over the closing picture of the old martinet, having lost his fortune, obliged to dwell in a charity home with other indigent parasites. I speak for one reader, who could have borne with entire equanimity to see the major at work on the rock-pile, accompanied by all the other idle clubmen of London.

Thackeray in his writings rebelled against some conventions of his world, but in his every-day life he was as helpless as Amelia Sedley. His wife became insane, so he fell victim of that superstition which condemns the innocent partner in such a marriage to life-long celibacy. Thackeray, enduring this infliction, seemed heroic to his friends, and pitiful to us. He left it to a woman novelist, George Eliot, to set the precedent of defiance to this especially idiotic tribal taboo. George Eliot loved George Henry Lewes, who had an insane wife, and she went and lived with Lewes for twenty-four years, until his death, and told all the world about it. Thus we have one pleasant detail to record concerning Victorian England.

In his early days Thackeray had lived poorly, because he had to; but later he acquired a taste for expensive food, and especially drink, and thereby ruined his health and died at the age of fifty-two. This, of course, was devoutly concealed by his daughters, and explains the fact that no biography was published. Like other conventional gentlemen, he felt bound to provide incomes for these daugh-

ters, so he wasted his time trying to get some government sinecure, first in the post office, and then in the diplomatic service—the very kind of thing he exposed in his stories. He took to lecturing, following in the foot-steps of Dickens, but not enjoying the work, because he had nothing of the showman in him, but on the contrary the English gentleman's intense reserve.

All this is what is called "gossip," and is supposed to have nothing to do with the works of a great writer. I record my belief, that the character and life experiences of an artist make his works of art, in the same way that a mold makes the image out of the liquid metal. The quickest route to the understanding of any novelist or poet is to know these personal details about him; and above all, his relationship to those who paid him the money which kept him alive from day to day. Whether he conforms, or whether he rebels, these money-forces condition a man's life.

## CHAPTER LXXIV

### ARTS AND CRAFTS

Capitalist industrialism may be indicted on economic grounds because it is wasteful, and on moral grounds because it is dishonest; also it may be indicted upon esthetic grounds because it is ugly. The artistic temperament objects to it for this last reason, and there were some among the artists who set out to make war upon it.

John Ruskin was the son of a wealthy English wine merchant; he devoted himself to the study of art, and sought to carry it back to the simple standards of the Christian primitives. He became a lecturer and teacher, and founded a college for the sons of workingmen at Oxford. We find him leading groups of British university students out to do manual labor upon the roads—a pathetic effort to be useful and honest in a world of cheating and exploiting. In the end Ruskin went out of his mind, as a result of brooding over the ugliness and cruelty of his country's industrial system.

Among his disciples was one who is entitled to a place in these pages, because he was a working artist who strove to create beauty upon a sound social basis; also because

he was a Socialist who tried to teach the principles of brotherhood and solidarity to a world of individualist and capitalist art.

William Morris was born in 1834; his parents were wealthy and he inherited a comfortable income. His mother designed him for a bishop, but he soon outgrew that career. He parted with his Christian faith on the intellectual side, but he still kept its emotions; he was a passionate lover of the Middle Ages, and of the Gothic spirit in art. He managed to persuade himself that the Middle Ages had been happy, and that the craftsmen in those days had been free to make what they loved without reference to the profit motive. So all his life he yearned back to those good old days, and made them a standard by which to judge everything bad in his own time.

He was a simple, whole-souled fellow, who loved to do things with his hands, and possessed extraordinary aptitude for all the arts; he learned to paint and to carve and to decorate, and to do every kind of hand labor that contained any slightest element of artistry. He looked out upon modern industrialism and saw wholesale, cheap production of ugly and commonplace and unsubstantial goods. He hated it with his whole soul, and attributed all the moral evils of the time to the fact that the workers had lost their love for their job and their pride in craftsmanship. He wanted a home to live in, and because no architect knew how to design a beautiful home, Morris became his own architect; because he could not buy any beautiful furniture, he designed his own furniture and had a carpenter make it. Out of this came the establishment of a firm to do such labor, and so grew the Arts and Crafts movement.

That brought Morris into touch with workingmen, a very dangerous thing; because under our present social system it is better for a gentleman to stay in his own class, and not find out what is happening to the workers. Morris was drawn into politics—beginning, curiously enough, with an effort to save old churches and other buildings from being "restored" according to modern taste. Before long we find him evolved into one of the leading Victorian rebels, a founder of the Social-Democratic Federation, speaking afternoons and evenings at

soap-box meetings. The critics lamented this, just as they lamented the political career of John Milton: it seemed such a waste of time for a great poet and artist. But it was all a part of William Morris's life; if he had not been the kind of man he was, he could not have produced the kind of art he did.

In between all his other labors he wrote poetry; it flowed out of him freely, wonder tales of all sorts, having to do with those old times which he loved, and the beautiful things which he imagined happening there. It is very good narrative verse, and all young people ought to read "The Earthly Paradise"; also they ought to read "The Dream of John Ball," and learn what happened to the social rebels in the old days.

Morris's most popular piece of prose writing is "News from Nowhere." He had read Bellamy's Utopia, "Looking Backward," and he did not like it, because Bellamy was an American, and had organized and systematized the world. Nobody was going to organize and systematize William Morris; he set about to make his own Utopia, in which everything is placid and commonplace, healthy as the animals are healthy—but also abominably dull.

Says Mrs. Ogi: "You are discussing one of the classics of your movement, and you know what the critics all say: the Socialists ought to begin by agreeing on what they want."

"I know," says Ogi, "and I'm sorry to disappoint them. But there are many different kinds of people in the world, and some of each kind in our movement. I am a Socialist who believes in machinery, and has no interest in any world that does not develop machine power to the greatest possible extent. We are like people traveling through a tunnel; it is dark and smoky, and some want to turn back, but I want to go through to the other end."

"Morris and Ruskin said the other end was in hell."

"Yes, but I think their eyes were blinded by the smoke. What is wrong is not with machinery, but with the private ownership of machinery. There is no reason why machines should not make beautiful and substantial things, instead of making ugly and dishonest things—except the fact that the machines are owned by people

who have no interest except to make a profit out of the product. A thing is not less beautiful because there are millions of other things exactly like it in the world. That is just a snobbish notion, and Morris should have learned the lesson from any field of daisies."

Here is Sherwood Anderson telling the story of his life. He is one American who does not like machinery, and he has good reason; he has worked in factories, and he knows. He agrees with Morris that the monotony of the machine destroys the initiative and therefore the morals of the workers; they cannot create, and so they tell smutty stories. But you note that Anderson is not a Socialist, and has not the vision of what a factory might be if it were democratically owned and managed by the workers. The workers will then be very proud of their beautiful machines, they will learn to understand and tend them all, and administer the politics of the great industry of which the machines are a part. The individual worker will travel from the factories to the harvest fields and back, as many varieties of labor as he fancies. And anyhow he won't have to work but three or four hours a day, and the rest of the time he can develop his faculties by making verses, or playing music, or staging dramas, or baseball games, or whatever he pleases. And every year the machines will become more automatic, until some day the only labor of man will consist of pressing a few buttons every morning. Whether you like that or not depends entirely upon whether or not you have developed your brains, and want to develop them still further.

## CHAPTER LXXV

### SEEING AMERICA FIRST

The spirit of John Milton and John Bunyan crossed the Atlantic Ocean and settled in Massachusetts, and the spirit of their enemies crossed the Atlantic Ocean and settled in Virginia. They made two civilizations, and these civilizations fought a civil war in the new world, just as they had done in the old.

For the first two hundred years the colonists were busy killing Indians and clearing the wilderness, so they had little time for art. They had to break their ties with

the old country; and just as we saw Voltaire finding it easier to rebel in religion and politics than in the field of culture, so in America we shall find that the Declaration of Independence was signed a long time before any artist was bold enough to revolt from British standards of taste. The first American writers were concerned to handle American themes as they imagined Addison and Steele and Burke and Dryden would have done.

The first writer to escape this British tradition did so, not by making an American tradition, but by ascending into the universal and transcendental. Ralph Waldo Emerson read Goethe and Swedenborg and Plato and the Hindus, and became a Yankee mystic and democratic saint.

He was the son of a Unitarian clergyman, and followed in his father's footsteps. But early in life he realized that he no longer believed the special doctrines which gave meaning to the communion service, so he stood up in his church, and very quietly and simply told about his new convictions, and went out into the world to earn his living as an independent lecturer.

Puritanism was now two hundred years ancient, but the temper of it still survived in New England; that is, people were painfully anxious to do right, and looked up to teachers who had studied such problems. They were willing to gather in meeting places, and be advised what they should do, and to pay a modest stipend to the adviser. So this young rebel was able to earn the simple living which sufficed everyone in Concord in those days. He studied the world's best literature in several languages, he thought earnestly and wrote honestly, and was a model of dignity, kindness, and wisdom.

His most popular lectures are known to us as "Emerson's Essays." I read them in youth, and owe to them a tribute of gratitude. First of all, they teach self-reliance, the most fundamental of the pioneer virtues. It was by self-reliant men that New England was made; and in this atmosphere of extreme individualism, it was impossible for a philosopher to value the equally fundamental virtue of solidarity. Emerson has no conception of a cooperative world, and believes that he has done his duty to his fellows by courtesy and the speaking of the truth.

The essays are formless, consisting of scattered para-

graphs and random reflections. They are not always easy to interpret, because they soar into regions of the absolute, where every statement is equally as untrue as it is true. The bearings depend upon the application; so that we have to know Emerson's whole thought, and his life. Applying the highest tests, we find his doctrine a little thin and his example a little tame. He lived through stern times, and while his voice was always on the right side, we feel that he might have been more prompt and more vigorous. His optimism is beautiful, but a trifle lacking in content. We want a man to put more reality into his writings, to show us how to deal with the grim and hateful facts of life. Emerson makes a cryptic statement—

> I am owner of the sphere,
> Of the seven stars and the solar year,
> Of Caesar's hand, and Plato's brain,
> Of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakespeare's strain.

We say: yes, perhaps; but most of us find it difficult to get the Shakespeare strain to come out of us. Likewise, we do not know quite how to reconcile Lord Christ with Caesar; nor can we always get Lord Christ to agree with Shakespeare—watch the scoffing this book will cause among the critics! You see how these mystic utterances are liable to be misunderstood; and how it was possible for the transcendentalist movement, which produced Emerson, to produce also the horrors of "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures."

On the other hand, when Emerson deals with justice and liberty in New England he can deliver as heavy a punch as Byron: for example, his "Boston Hymn," discussing the question of compensation for the enfranchised slaves—

> Pay ransom to the owner,
> And fill the bag to the brim.
> Who is the owner? The slave is owner,
> And ever was. Pay him.

I have discussed these lines in "The Book of Life," and suggested how much cheaper it would have been to pay the owners than to fight the Civil War. I overlooked the fact that this "Boston Hymn" was written after the Civil War was on. Emerson, combining Yankee economy

with wise humanity, had all along been advocating the sensible course of freeing the slaves by purchase.

We think of this Concord sage as a philosopher, and less often as a poet. But he was a great poet; at his best he is among the immortals. Not only is there wisdom and moral beauty in his verse; there is love of nature, and there is passion. People sometimes died young in Concord, just as they did in old England and in Greece, and poets poured their sorrow into song. Emerson's "Threnody," written upon the death of his five-year-old son, is lacking in all the classical paraphernalia of Milton's "Lycidas," but it is full of such beauty and fervor as are native to our country, and I see no reason why we Americans should devote all our time to the worship of foreign gods. If our colleges must teach the classics, to the exclusion of modern work, let them at least teach our native classics, which are easier for us to understand.

I propose a motto for our youth: See Emerson first!

## CHAPTER LXXVI

### THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

America at this time was an overgrown youthful body, ill-supplied with mind; and a few ardent believers in culture set out to fill this need. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was a student at Bowdoin College, and the faculty decided that Cervantes and Dante and Goethe and Moliere and Hugo ought to be more than names to the American people; somebody ought to study these languages and literatures, and pass them on. They gave Longfellow a traveling scholarship for three years, and he went abroad and collected things romantic and beautiful and innocent in Spain and Italy and Germany and France, and came home and spent the next twenty or thirty years in teaching them, first at Bowdoin and then at Harvard. He translated poetry, and also wrote poetry of his own, very much resembling the translations. At the age of forty-seven he became a poet exclusively, and lived to be a seventy-five-year-old boy, just as romantic and beautiful and innocent as when he had first gone out to gather nourishment for the hungry young soul of America.

Longfellow was a moralist, and it was his purpose to

draw useful conclusions in his poetry. He would start by looking at the planet Mars, and end by proving that human beings must be brave and self-reliant: not that there is anything remotely suggesting such qualities in a "red planet," but because this planet happens to be named after the God of war. He would look at a ship on the stocks, and draw conclusions about the government of his country. He would look at the village blacksmith, and thank him for a lesson in diligence and sobriety.

That kind of poetry has now gone out of fashion. The young intellectuals of America are no longer romantic and beautiful and innocent, and they say that Longfellow is propaganda. But you know my thesis by now—theirs is just as much propaganda, only it is on the other side. What Longfellow called art is incitement towards diligence and sobriety, while what our young sophisticates call art is incitement toward going to hell in a hurry. Anything that pictures the delights of the senses and the breakdown of the will is art; but poor Longfellow, in an unguarded moment, had the misfortune to exclaim that

> Life is real! Life is earnest!
> And the grave is not its goal.

These two lines have been enough to damn him in the eyes of a whole generation of coterie-litterateurs.

Turning the pages of the art which Longfellow brought back from Europe, there flashes to mind a memory of the days when I also traveled in Europe, collecting culture. It was in Naples, a soft moonlit evening in early spring, and I stood before a great statue, noting its dim outlines. A figure slipped up beside me, and a soft voice began to whisper, offering to take me to a place where there were beautiful boys: "beautiful, sweet Neapolitan boys," I remember the phrase. I wonder what the traveling idealist from Bowdoin College would have made of such a whisper in the moonlight!

That was a dozen years ago, and we in America have learned something about Europe since then. I am the last person in the world who would desire a return to the age of innocence, or advocate, even for the young, the blinking of grim and hideous facts. But this I do believe: a time will come, and not so far in the future, when American youth will react from the hip-pocket flask and petting-

party stage of culture. With full knowledge of vice and disease, it will choose virtue and health, because these are the truly interesting and worth while things, and the truly great themes of art.

Pending the arrival of such a time, I record my notion, that poetry does not cease to be great because it is declaimed by a million schoolboys. "To be or not to be," and "Friends, Romans, countrymen," are great poetry, even though we personally are tired of them. If it be permitted to tell a story in verse, then assuredly "The Wreck of the Hesperus" is a tragic story told in vivid and stirring language. I say that anyone who does not know this for a great ballad simply does not know what a ballad is. You may spend your time digging in Percy's "Reliques" and other old volumes, and find things less easy to read, but nothing more worth reading. I go farther and admit that when I was young I found delight in "Paul Revere's Ride" and "Hiawatha" and "Evangeline," and I don't believe that kind of young person is yet entirely extinct in America.

## CHAPTER LXXVII

### A SNOW-BOUND SAINT

The Puritans, having been driven from England by religious persecution, set to work in their New England to persecute others. Among their victims was a Massachusetts Quaker by the name of Whittier, who was deprived of the franchise for daring to petition the town council for liberty to preach. Undaunted by the punishment, this pioneer raised a family of ten stalwart children in the Quaker faith, and became the great-great-grandfather of a Quaker poet, who has received but scant appreciation from the literary critics of his country.

John Greenleaf Whittier was born in 1807, one of a large family, and grew up to toil upon a rocky farm. He got his education in a country school, and his first glimpse of poetry from a wandering Scotchman who spent a night at the farm-house, and who sang the songs of Robert Burns. The frail and sensitive lad who sat and listened enraptured was to grow up to be the Burns of New Eng-

land; a saintly Burns, having the Scotch poet's energy and rebellious ardor, but not his destroying vices.

Independence, hard work, and religion were the three factors in Whittier's environment. He wanted to go to an academy to continue his education, but there was no money, so he earned it by work as a cobbler. You remember the sneer of the Tory critic—"Back to your gallipots, Mr. Keats"; and here we find a critic satirizing our Quaker poet: "the wax still sticking to his fingers' ends." You remember how Keats fell in love with an elegant young lady; Whittier became a country editor and presumed to aspire to the daughter of a local judge, and was spurned, and went back home, ill, poverty-stricken and humiliated.

But he continued to study and write verses, and found another job as editor, and a prospect of success in politics. Then came the crisis in his life; the anti-slavery movement was making its first feeble beginnings in New England, and Whittier became the friend of William Lloyd Garrison, and spent sleepless nights wrestling with the angel of duty. At the age of twenty-seven he made the choice; he threw away his career, and spent his hard-won savings to print and send out five hundred copies of an address in opposition to chattel slavery. We who in these days are daring to challenge wage slavery, and are witnessing mobbings and jailings and torturing for the cause, must not forget that back in the 1830's this gentle Quaker poet was stoned and nearly lynched in Massachusetts, and mobbed again and had his office burned about his head in Philadelphia.

He suffered from ill health all his life, yet he never gave up the cause. He suffered from poverty; having a mother and sisters dependent upon him, he was too poor ever to marry. He continued to edit papers, he wrote and spoke against slavery, and composed verses which were taken up and recopied by constantly increasing numbers of newspapers. Many of these verses are now found in his collected works, and one who reads them is surprised by their uniformly high quality, not merely the fervor and energy, but the beauty of expression and the treasures of imagination which this self-taught country boy poured into his propaganda. You recall Browning's rebuke to the old poet Wordsworth, "The Lost Leader." Here is Whit-

tier's "Ichabod," rebuking Daniel Webster for his apostasy to the cause of freedom—

All else is gone, from those great eyes
The soul has fled:
When faith is lost, when honor dies,
The man is dead!

Whittier was not among the fanatics of the movement; on the contrary, he was a shrewd politician, interested in moving the minds of his fellows and in getting something done. He helped in the forming of the Abolition party, which later became the Free Soil party, and then the Republican party of Lincoln. As a Quaker he could not support the war, yet he managed to write verses about it—for example, when Stonewall Jackson was unwilling to kill old Barbara Frietchie for hanging out the Stars and Stripes in Frederick. It is probable that this incident never happened, but it made a very popular poem.

Whittier never went to college, he never traveled in Europe to acquire a foreign tone; he remained an American peasant. He voiced their thoughts in their own language, and they have cherished him, and will some day force the critics to give him his due place. If you are looking for ballads made out of native material, read the story of old Skipper Ireson, who roused the fury of his villagers by sailing away from a ship in distress:

Old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart
By the women of Marblehead.

If you are looking for American sentiment, for simple, untouched democracy, read "Maud Muller." Above all, if you want the inner essence of New England farm life, the mingled harshness and beauty of its body, and the mingled sternness and charm of its spirit, read "Snow-Bound."

## CHAPTER LXXVIII

### PURITANISM IN DECAY

The Puritans of Massachusetts, having killed the Indians and fenced the farms and built the towns, settled into the routine of getting one another's money. The more enterprising ones moved West, where there was more

money; the others sunk into slow decay. Puritanism came to mean, not aggressive virtue, but negative avoidance. Before it passed away entirely, it produced a man of genius who was of it enough to know it thoroughly, yet sufficiently out of it to be able to embody it in art.

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, a port which had once been prosperous, but had lost in competition with the great cities. It was a mournful place, living in the memory of its past, which included the drowning and hanging of witches, a frenzy of religious terror in which an ancestor of Hawthorne had been a persecuting judge. One of this judge's victims had put a curse upon him, and the novelist pictures himself, playfully, as the last sad relic of this curse. He was a solitary man, born to poverty, shy, aloof and obscure. Recognition did not come until the middle forties, and meantime he lived in ancient, lonely houses, staying indoors by day and wandering the streets by night. He had no political sense, no social sense; events in the world outside meant little—he lived in the past.

Yet, strangely enough, he did not accept the ideas of this past. He had nothing of the robust Tory fervor of Sir Walter Scott; he was a modern man, and a quiet, skeptical humor shines through his pages. What had happened was that his faith had dried up, and nothing else had come to take its place; so there he was, not knowing why, or how, or to what end. He wrote elaborate diaries, full of minute details about the things which happened hour by hour; things which only a child would consider worth recording. He would produce and publish a sketch in which, with really beautiful art, he would describe the sensations of walking about the streets of Salem on a rainy night, and how the lights shone in the puddles—yellow lights of the street-lamps and blue and green lights from the drug-stores.

He gathered strange legends of old-time people, living terror-haunted lives, driven to sin by the very desperation of their efforts to avoid it. The pangs of conscience are Hawthorne's "local color" and artistic tradition; he knows them in every detail, but he himself is not under their spell—they are like bric-à-brac and objects of art which he collects. "Twice-Told Tales" was the title of his first volume, and this, you see, prepares us for con-

scious literary artifice. Then we have "Mosses from an Old Manse" which promises mournfulness and moldiness, desolation and decay. Then "The House of the Seven Gables," the hiding place of an old and dying family haunted by a curse.

"The Scarlet Letter" brought its author instant recognition, and is considered by many critics America's most authentic masterpiece of fiction. A young married woman in the old-time witch-hunting Salem has yielded to adulterous love for a young clergyman. A child is born, and the mother is publicly accused, and exhibited upon the scaffold, with the letter "A" embroidered in scarlet cloth upon her dress. She will not reveal the name of her lover, and so the young clergyman escapes obloquy, but is haunted by that sense of guilt which is the principal product of Puritanism in decay.

The "eternal triangle," you see; but it differs from other triangles in that it is not a story of passion, but of punishment. We do not see the guilty love in the days of its happiness, but only in the days of its remorse. As in all Hawthorne's stories, we meet, not people who are acting, but people who are looking back upon actions long since committed. This is one kind of art, and I admit the greatness of "The Scarlet Letter" as a piece of technique. But we are here discussing art works as human and social products; and I point out, as in the case of so many other tragedies, how temporary and unsubstantial is the ground upon which it rests.

The ethical basis of "The Scarlet Letter" is the conviction that marriage is indissoluble, and that a young woman who has been given in marriage to an elderly man, and finds herself unhappy, is bound by the laws of God to remain in the bonds of that unhappy marriage. But suppose, for the sake of argument, that the ideas of mankind should undergo a change; suppose we should come to the conviction that a young woman who finds herself married to an elderly man whom she does not love, and who conceives an intense and enduring passion for a younger man, and desires to have children by that younger man—suppose we should decide that this woman, in remaining with the older and unloved man, and denying life to children by the younger man, is committing a crime against posterity, violating a fundamental law upon which

race progress depends? You can see that in that case "The Scarlet Letter" would become entirely archaic, an object of curiosity mingled with repugnance.

The American government honored this eminently respectable novelist by making him, first a gauger of customs, and then its consul to Liverpool. He was a prematurely old man then, and fled from the cold fogs of England to Rome—which he liked no better. But he patiently collected information concerning Roman antiquities, and composed a novel called "The Marble Faun," which is dutifully read as a guide book by all school-marms visiting the Eternal City. How well adapted this Puritan genius was to interpret the Latin world, you may judge from the fact that he was shocked by nude statues, and could not see why sculptors continued to overlook the necessity for marble clothing. That skin was made before clothing, and may continue to be worn after clothing is forgotten, is a fact which did not occur to this traveler from Salem.

He came back to pass his last days in an America torn by the agonies of the Civil War. He was a Democrat by force of inertia, and had written a campaign biography of the genial and bibulous President Pierce. He had no understanding of the war, nor of the new America which was to be born from it. In these last pathetic days he reminds us of the poor old Tory, Sir Walter Scott, facing the Reform Bill and the Chartist riots and "the country mined below our feet." I plead with artists to step ahead of the procession in their youth, so that in their old age they may not be left so pitifully far behind.

## CHAPTER LXXIX

### THE ANGEL ISRAFEL

The Puritans who settled Massachusetts believed that happiness was to be found in the repressing of the "carnal nature." The Cavaliers who settled Maryland and Virginia believed in enjoyment, and rode their passions at a gallop. It was appropriate that these Cavaliers should give to America an artist who taught that sensuous beauty is a mystic revelation of God, and that poetry must be music, to the exclusion of intellect and moral sense.

A Maryland general's son ran away and married a young actress, and these two lived a wretched, hand-to-mouth existence, and died in a garret, leaving three infants. One of the three was named Edgar Poe, and our first glimpse of him shows a nurse feeding him upon a "sugar-tit" soaked in gin. A little later we find him adopted by a sentimental lady named Allan, and made into a kind of drawing-room pet, taught to pledge toasts in drink. He was an exquisite little fellow, proud, sensitive and self-willed; and in his early training we note the seeds of all his later misery.

He began writing poetry in childhood, and we still read verses which he composed in his 'teens. He was sent to the University of Virginia, where along with rich men's sons he gambled and drank. He deserted the University, quarreled with his benefactors, and enlisted in the army. They got him out and sent him to West Point, which is famous for having graduated a number of soldiers, and for having failed to graduate two artists, Edgar Allan Poe and James McNeill Whistler. Poe wrote verses and drank brandy with his room-mates, and finally set about to get himself expelled from a life which he hated.

So here he was at the age of twenty-two, a poet, a rebel and a drunkard. He had eighteen years more to live, and during that time his life was one long agony of struggle. He had brilliant gifts, his work found recognition, and he got many editorial positions, but could not keep them. He wandered from city to city, quarreled with both enemies and friends, and exhibited all those forms of evasion and dishonesty for which alcohol and opium are responsible. . .

"How much shall I say about the great curse of the South?" asks Ogi.

"Say it all," says his wife.

"I recall those old Maryland and Virginia homesteads, dark and dusty, falling to decay; a few sticks of furniture, moth-eaten hangings, and silent, pale, in-door men and women—the former drinking, the latter taking drugs and patent medicines. I remember also the well-to-do families in the towns, the wild young cursing blades, and the old topers with trembling hands. I remember the uncle who shot off his head in the park, and that other uncle, with a distinguished naval record, who lived into old age

without ever being sober. I remember my own father, and my childhood and youth of struggle to save him. All these men were kind and gentle, idealistic, charming in manners—"

"I, too, had an uncle," says Mrs. Ogi; "the tenderest heart you ever knew. He drank because he could not stand the life he saw about him, the unsolvable race problem, the mass of ignorance and brutality. I would get his bottle away from him and hide it, and then in his torment he would go so far as a 'damn'; but I never saw him so drunk that he failed to apologize for such a word."

We must take Poe as one of the pitiful victims of these customs; we must understand that his virtues were his own, while his vices were fed to him in a "sugar-tit." Of all American poets up to this time his was the greatest genius; his was the true fire, the energy, the vision—and for the most part it was wasted and lost. It was wasted, not merely because he got drunk, because he was always on the verge of starvation, because he was chained to slavery, and had to write pot-boilers under the orders of men with routine or mercenary minds; it was wasted also because he was a victim of perverse theories about art and life. He began, as a child, with imitations of Byron, and then came under the spell of Coleridge's disorderly genius. We might take a great part of Poe's work, just as we took "Kubla Khan," and show how his talent goes into the portrayal of every imaginable kind of ruin, terror and despair.

We cannot say to what extent Poe's art theories were the product of his vices, and to what extent the vices were the product of the theories. After he left West Point, and was starving in Baltimore, he met his cousin, a frail, sensitive child, as poor as himself. He married her when she was less than fourteen years old; he adored her, but their life was a long crucifixion, because of her failing health. Several times she broke a blood vessel, and in the end she faded away from tuberculosis. The shadow of that tragedy hung over Poe's whole mature life, and you will note that his loveliest poetry deals with beautiful women who are dying or dead.

In this tormented body there lived and wrought not merely a great genius, but also a great mind. Poe was a critic, of a kind entirely new to America. He did not

distribute indiscriminate praise from motives of patriotism and puffery; he had critical standards, right or wrong, and was merciless to the swarms of art pretenders. Naturally, therefore, he was hated and furiously attacked; and because of his weaknesses, he was an easy mark for all.

His art theories were those which we are here seeking to overthrow; how false and dangerous they were, his life attests. It is interesting to note that in one of his youthful poems, the first real utterance of his genius, he took a quite different view. Quoting an imaginary passage from the Koran about the angel Israfel, "whose heart-strings are a lute," he wrote:

> Therefore thou art not wrong,
> Israfeli, who despisest
> An unimpassioned song;
> To thee the laurels belong,
> Best bard, because the wisest.

Well might this tormented Baltimore poet long for the wisdom of the Mohammedan angel! He spent his great analytical powers in concocting a "moon hoax," and in solving all the cryptograms which empty-headed people sent him. It was as if a man should build a mighty engine, and then set it to fanning the air. In his last pitiful years he composed an elaborate work on metaphysics, which he called "Eureka," meaning that he had solved the secret of the ages, the nature of existence and the absolute. It is like all other metaphysics—a cobweb spun out of words; the mighty engine has here been set to fanning a vacuum.

Poe was a fighting man and an ardent propagandist. He fought for art, for the freedom and the glory and the joy of art, as a thing apart from humanity, and from the sense of brotherhood and human solidarity. Life wreaked its vengeance upon him, his punishment was heavy enough, and we should be content with voicing our pity—but for the fact that his art theories are still alive in the world, wrecking other young artists. This is what makes necessary the painful task of drawing moral lessons over the graves of "mighty poets in their misery dead."

## CHAPTER LXXX

### THE GOOD GREY POET

Edgar Allan Poe lived and wrote to prove that art excludes morality. We come now to another poet, who lived and wrote to prove that art excludes everything else. He had a message and a faith, which was the dominating motive in everything he wrote; in short, he was one of the major prophets—like Dante, Milton, Tolstoi, Nietzsche, who used art as a means of swaying the souls of men.

Referring thus to Walt Whitman, we now have upon our side the weight of critical authority; learned and entirely respectable college professors write in this fashion about his books, and do not lose their positions for so doing. But realize how different it was in Whitman's lifetime; in the early years respectable opinion looked upon him as a kind of obscene maniac. His first edition of "Leaves of Grass," a thousand copies printed by himself, was left on his hands, except for those which he sent out free—and even some of these were returned, one by the poet Whittier! A critic wrote that Whitman was "as unacquainted with art as a hog with mathematics." Another wrote that he "deserved the whip of the public executioner." He was thrown out of a government position in Washington for having a copy of his book locked up in his own desk, and again and again his publishers were forced by threat of public prosecution to withdraw the book from circulation. Alone among Whitman's contemporaries to recognize his genius was Emerson, and when Whitman published Emerson's letter in the second edition of "Leaves of Grass," Emerson was embarrassed —for in the meantime his horrified friends had persuaded him to hesitate in his opinion. From all this we may learn how difficult it is to judge one's contemporaries.

Walt Whitman was born of farmer folk in an isolated part of Long Island. His father became a carpenter and moved to Brooklyn, then a small town. Walt became an office boy at the age of twelve; he got hold of some good reading, learned printing, and became a teacher, and something of an orator. He was an abolitionist, a teetotaler and other kinds of "crank"; a slow-moving, rather

stubborn youth, who wandered about from place to place, meeting all kinds of people, watching life with interest, but caring nothing for success. He had a good job as a newspaper editor, but gave it up because of his views on slavery. He set a new fashion in life—a type of man now common in the radical movement, who does enough manual labor to keep alive, and spends the rest of his time studying literature and life. Walt's people loved him, but could not make him out; they thought he was lazy when he loafed and invited his soul.

He was finding his own way, guided by the unfolding genius within. He wanted to know people, every kind that lived; he wanted to talk with them, to feel himself one with them. He worked with laborers on the job, he rode in ferry-boats, he made friends with the drivers of busses. He wanted to see America, so he wandered by slow stages to New Orleans and back. He wanted to know literature, so he read, but according to his own taste, taking no one's opinions. When he was ready to express himself, it was a self hitherto unknown in literature, and the most startling voice yet lifted in America.

It often happens that the student learns about new and vital movements through the writings of their opponents. Thus the present writer was made into a rationalist by the reading of Christian apologetics. In the same way I learned about Whitman from an essay by Sidney Lanier, a respectable gentleman-poet from the South, who demonstrated that Whitman's claim to be the voice of democracy was nonsense; the masses of the people had no interest whatever in this eccentric poetry, and could not understand what the poet was driving at.

Does a poet necessarily have to be appreciated by those of whom he writes? Or is it possible to tell something about people which they themselves do not yet know? If a man is picking apples, he is obeying the laws of gravitation, and the apples likewise are obeying it. Sir Isaac Newton comes along, and interprets the behavior of the man and of the apples. Does the truth of Newton's law depend upon the assent of the apple-picker?

Walt Whitman did really know the American people, the masses, as distinguished from the cultured few; he knew them as no man of letters up to that time had known them. He believed there were tremendous, instinctive

forces working within them, and that he, as poet and seer, could enter into that unconscious mass-being and understand it and guide it. He believed that he was laying out the path which democracy would follow, he was voicing the desires it would feel, the love and fellowship and solidarity it would embody in institutions and arts. Whether he was right in these intuitions and mystical prophesyings was for the future to decide. Certainly there were two kinds of persons in Whitman's own day who could not decide; one was the average wage-slave, ignorant and groping; and the other was a gentleman from Georgia, who made excellent but customary rhymes about birds and brooks and flowers.

Walt Whitman was one of those mystics to whom the inner essence of all things is the same; all life is sacred, and all men are brothers in a common Fatherhood. Jesus taught that, and in the nineteen hundred years which have since passed new prophets have arisen every now and then to revive it—but the Christians are just as much scandalized every time. Whitman's title, "Leaves of Grass," under which he included all his poems, means that he chose the most common and least distinguished product of nature for his symbol of the human soul. The poet himself was one of these "Leaves of Grass," and celebrated himself as the representative and voice of the rest. He sang the song of himself, and his contemporaries thought this was crude and barbarous egotism. This big bearded fellow who printed his own poems, with a preface to tell how great they were, and his picture in a workingman's dress without a necktie—he was nothing but a hoodlum, and the critics called for the police.

The worst stumbling block was the portion of the book called "Children of Adam," dealing with sex. The Anglo-Saxon race was used to horrified silence about sex, and also to sly leering about sex; the one thing it had never encountered was simple frankness. What Whitman did was to take sex exactly as it is, a part of life, and write about it as he wrote about everything else. When I, as a student, first looked up "Leaves of Grass" in the Columbia University library, I found this portion of the book so thumbed and worn as to make plain that the young readers had not been taught to understand Whitman. For he gave to this part of his message its due proportion and

no more. He was a clean man, living an abstemious and even ascetic life, developing his mind as well as his body.

The Civil War came, and the moral greatness of Whitman was made apparent. He went to Washington as a sort of amateur nurse; living on almost nothing, he devoted his entire time to visiting in the hospitals, bringing comfort and affection to tens of thousands of suffering and neglected soldiers. His genius was for friendship, and everyone loved him; there are many stories of men whose lives were saved by his presence and his love. He was a big man, with ruddy cheeks and a full beard, turned gray under the strain of these years. It is interesting to note that Lincoln, meeting him, said the same words that Napoleon said to Goethe: "This is a man!"

"The good grey poet," as one of his friends called him, wrecked his health amid these frightful scenes, and was never the same again. He published more poems, "Drum-Taps," dealing with the war. All that which was called egotism is now burned away, and we have a revelation of a people uplifted by struggle. In 1871 came a prose work, "Democratic Vistas," in which his message is proclaimed even more clearly than in his verse. It is a call for a new art, based upon brotherhood and equality. Our New World democracy, declared Whitman, is "so far an almost complete failure in its social aspects, and in really grand religious, moral, literary and aesthetic results."

Whitman suffered a stroke of paralysis, recovered partially, and then suffered another stroke. He was more or less crippled through his last twenty years, and lived in extreme poverty; but gradually his fame spread and friends gathered about him. The labor movement was now emerging—and its leaders were discovering that this old poet had indeed forseen how they would feel. "My call is the call of battle—I nourish active rebellion." And each new generation of the young nourishers of rebellion feeds its soul upon Whitman's inspiration.

Is it poetry? That is a question over which battles are fought. It seems to me that words matter little; it is a kind of inspired chant, which moves you if you are susceptible to its ideas. For two years I steeped myself in the literature of the Civil War, while writing "Manassas"; and to me at that time "Drum-Taps" seemed to contain all the fervor and anguish of the conflict. But the every-

day person, who does not rise to those heights, prefers "O Captain, My Captain," which has the easier beauties of rhyme and fixed rhythm.

The critics have by now got used to Whitman's honesty about sex; the only stumbling block is his long catalogues of things. He will sing the human body, and give you a list of the parts thereof: and can that be poetry? But you must bear in mind that Whitman is more a seer than a poet. "Sermons in stones," said Shakespeare; and if the stones had names, Whitman would call the roll of them, and each would be a mystic symbol, and the total effect would be a hypnotic spell. It is an old trick of those who appeal to the subconscious mind; in the English Prayer-Book, for example, there is a chant: "O, all ye Works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him forever." The hymn goes on to name all the various aspects of nature: "O, all ye Showers and Dew . . . O, all ye Fire and Heat . . . Ye Lightnings and Clouds . . . Ye Mountains and Hills . . . Ye Seas and Floods . . . Ye Fowls of the Air . . . Ye Beasts and Cattle." . . . and so on through the many Works of the Lord which are invited to praise Him and magnify Him forever. So, if you are a mystic, you may contemplate with awe each separate miraculous product of that mysterious organizing force which has created a living human body.

The mystical life has its dangers, and also, alas! its boredoms. I have stated in the chapter on Emerson that there is no absolute which is not equally as false as it is true. Whitman has raised up a host of imitators, and I have read their alleged "free verse," and record the fact that it was surely a waste of my time, and apparently a waste of theirs. Also, I have known many followers of Walt Whitman, the greater number of whom have chosen to follow the poet's eccentricities, rather than his virtues. You see, it is so much easier to leave off a necktie and "loaf," than it is to have genius and create a new art form! Whitman is not alone in suffering through his disciples; Jesus had that tragic fate, and Nietzsche, and Tolstoi, and many another major prophet!

## CHAPTER LXXXI

### CABBAGE SOUP

We have been following the fortunes of a pioneer people breaking into the field of world culture. Let us now travel part way round the earth in either direction, and watch another pioneer people doing the same thing.

The differences between America and Russia are many and striking, and before we enter upon a study of Russian literature we must understand Russian life. Voltaire tells us that virtue and vice are products like vinegar, and we shall find this applies also to the Russian soul with its mysticism and melancholy. When the sun almost disappears for six months at a time, and icy blizzards rage, human beings have a tendency to stay by the fire and develop their inner natures; also they develop congested livers, and brood upon the futility of life.

Says Mrs. Ogi: "Don't forget that it often gets cold in New England."

"Yes, and there is both mysticism and melancholy in New England art. But the difference is that the people of New England escaped from the cradle of despotism in Asia many centuries earlier than the Russians. So the brooding of the New England colonist took the form of calling a town meeting to plan for the building of a new road in the spring. But the Russian could not do things for himself; he had to get the permission of officials. If he tried to act for himself, they would strip him and beat him with knouts until he swooned. So the Russian's brooding turned to despair, and he got drunk, and got into a fight and killed his neighbor, and then tried to make up his mind whether God would forgive him, or damn him to hell fire forever; he fretted over this problem until he went insane or wrote a novel—"

"Or both," says Mrs. Ogi.

The dominant fact in Russian art of the nineteenth century was despotism. Here was a vast empire of a hundred million people, energetic and aspiring; and the ruling class dreamed that they could introduce modern material civilization, while keeping out the modern mind and soul. Young Russians travelled, and learned to think as the rest of Europe thought; then they came home, to

find that the slightest attempt to teach or to organize was met by imprisonment, torture, exile, hard labor, or the scaffold. Wave after wave of rebellion swept Russia, to be met by wave after wave of repression. Intellectual activity which New England honored was in Russia a secret and criminal conspiracy; the youth of the country was broken in a torture chamber; and so we have the misery and distortion and impotence which we regard as characteristic Slavic qualities.

The Russian was supposed to be incapable of action, incapable of keeping an appointment on time, incapable of doing anything but drinking a hundred cups of tea and shedding tears over the fate of man. But now comes the revolution, and in a flash we discover that all that was buncombe. The Russians begin to act precisely like other men; they cease to get drunk, they learn to keep appointments, they discover a sudden admiration for those qualities we call Yankee—hustle and efficiency, the adjusting of one's desires to what can be immediately accomplished. The Russian peasant, supposed to be a grown-up and bearded cherub, lifting his eyes in adoration to his Little Father in the Winter Palace and his Big Father in Heaven, is discovered to have precisely the same desires as every other farmer in the world—that is to say, more land, and fewer tax-collectors.

Russian literature is a great literature, because it voices the hopes and resolves of a great people groping their way to freedom and understanding. It is, whether consciously or unconsciously, a literature of revolt. It is full of ideas, because it has to take the place of the prohibited subjects, science, politics, economics, and social psychology. It is desperately serious, because it is produced by people who are suffering. Some twenty years ago I remember meeting in New York the adopted son of Maxim Gorki, who was earning his living as a printer by day and studying our civilization by night. I recall his remark: "Americans do not know what the intellectual life means." The young man had in mind a country where you adopted ideas with the knowledge that they might cost you your liberty, and even your life. Under such circumstances you think hard before you come to a decision. A lot of Americans have had an opportunity to test their ideas that way during the past ten years, and

so they are now taking the intellectual life seriously, and producing literature in many ways resembling the Russian.

Says Mrs. Ogi: "Sherwood Anderson says it is because he was raised on cabbage soup."

"People will read that," says Ogi, "and think it a flash of humor; very few will consider seriously the effect of a starvation diet upon the soul of a sensitive boy. Neither will they stop to think about three boys sleeping in one bed as a source of abnormal sexual imaginings, which constitute one of the original elements in Sherwood Anderson's books. To me this seems a law: that wherever you have widespread and long-continued poverty, maintained by policemen's clubs, there you will have a literature, extremely painful to its creators, but delightful to high-brow critics, who will hail it as 'strong,' and up to the standard of the great Russian masters."

## CHAPTER LXXXII

### DEAD SOULS

The poet who taught the Russian people the possibilities of their language was Pushkin; one of those beautiful leisure-class youths who live fast and die young. He was born of an aristocratic family, and when he was twenty he was, like most poets, a hopeful idealist, and wrote an ode to liberty, and was condemned to exile. He lived a wild life among the gypsies, and wasted himself, and finally his family persuaded the tsar to give him another chance. He was brought back to court and made a small functionary, among illiterate, dull, supposed-to-be-great people who had no understanding of his talents. He married a beautiful noble lady, who betrayed him continuously and broke his heart.

Pushkin now wrote folk tales, and a great quantity of love poems in the Byronic manner. His idealism was dead; he was a court man, and went so far as to glorify the rape of Poland. He wrote a long narrative poem, "Eugene Onegin," which tells about the tragic love troubles of an aristocratic youth, together with all the details of his life, how he got up in the morning, how he sipped his chocolate, how he read his invitations to tea-parties and balls. You might not think there would be

great literature in such a story; but at least Pushkin dealt with Russian themes and with reality; he made it interesting, lending it the glamour of musical verse, and so he killed the old classical tradition in Russia. The Greek nymphs and the French shepherdesses went out of fashion, and the way was clear for Russian writers with something important to say to their people.

Then came Nikolai Gogol. He was a Little Russian; that is, he came from the Ukraine, which is in the South, and like all Southern countries is supposed to be warm-hearted and romantic. Gogol was a poor devil of a clerk, who leaped to fame by writing humorous tales, in which the laughter was mingled with tears. He did not put in any recognized "propaganda," for the simple reason that this would have cost him his liberty. In those days when you were discussing politics you announced yourself as a Hegelian Moderate or a Hegelian Leftist, or whatever it might be; in other words, you pretended to be discussing the ideas of a German philosopher, a spinner of metaphysical cobwebs, instead of dealing with the real problems of your country and time.

Gogol wrote a play called "The Inspector-General," which tells how a government representative is expected to visit a small provincial town, and all the functionaries are in a state of terror for fear their various stealings will be exposed. It is understood that the inspector-general will come in disguise, and so they mistake a youthful traveler for this functionary, and insist on doing him honor, to his great bewilderment. Finally the postmaster of the town, following his custom of secretly reading the mail, opens a letter from the young man to a friend, telling about his adventures and ridiculing the town functionaries. The postmaster reads this aloud in the hearing of the functionaries, to their great dismay.

Somebody read this play to the tsar, and he was so delighted that he ordered it produced. You remember King Louis of France, the "grand monarch," taking delight in Moliere's ridicule of his courtiers. The monarch can afford to laugh, or at least thinks he can; it is only the functionaries who realize the destructive power of laughter.

Then Gogol wrote a long novel, "Dead Souls." He introduces us to a young man who might be a graduate

of any one of a thousand schools and colleges and universities of "salesmanship" in the United States. So brilliant are this young man's talents:

> Whatsoever the conversation might be about, he always knew how to support it. If people talked about horses, he spoke about horses; if they began talking about the best hunting dogs, here also Tchitchikov would make remarks to the point. If the conversation related to some investigation which was being made by the government, he would show that he also knew something about the tricks of the civil service functionaries. When the talk was about billiards, he showed that in billiards he could keep his own; if people talked about virtue, he also spoke about virtue, even with tears in his eyes; and if the conversation turned on making brandy, he knew all about brandy.

This expert in the psychology of salesmanship had a truly Yankee idea to make his fortune. At that time the Russian peasants were sold with the land, and the landlord had to pay taxes on all his serfs. A reckoning was made at certain periods, and if any serfs died in between the periods of reckoning, the landlord had to pay taxes just the same. Now, said the salesman to himself, any landlord will be glad to sell me these "dead souls"; and when I have bought a great number of them, I will get hold of a piece of land, and move all these "dead souls" to that land, and some bank will lend me a great sum of money, not knowing they are dead.

To travel over Russia and interview landlords on such an errand is in itself high comedy. Gogol takes us to one estate after another, and lets us see the misery of the serfs, and the incompetence and futility of the landlords; the ones who are kind-hearted and sentimental don't know what to do, and cause just as much misery as the brutal ones. Such a situation requires no comment from the novelist; merely to know about it is to condemn it. So it happened that Gogol's story became a revolutionary document, and was copied out by hand and passed about among the young rebels. The government intervened, preventing a second edition of the book; and poor Gogol, a little later in his life, turned into some kind of religious maniac, and repented of what he had written, and burned great quantities of his manuscripts, including the latter part of this novel. That gives us a glimpse of the "Russian soul," and makes us realize what a distance these people had to travel from Oriental barbarism to modern individualism.

## CHAPTER LXXXIII

### THE RUSSIAN HAMLET

The modern world was there, and it kept calling to the youth of Russia. There came a skillful novelist, whose task it was to interpret his country to the outside world, and at the same time to interpret the outside world to Russia. He came of a family of wealthy landowners, and received the best education available; but he ventured at the funeral of Gogol to praise the work of this great master—which so incensed the government that he was sentenced to exile upon his own estate. Three years later he succeeded in getting permission to go abroad, and lived the rest of his life in Germany and France, where he was free to write as he pleased.

The first work of Ivan Turgenev was called "A Sportsman's Sketches"; pictures of the peasant types he met while on shooting trips. It was a safe, aristocratic occupation, that of killing birds for pleasure, and surely no government could object to a gentleman's describing the peasants who went along to carry his guns and his lunch. The government did not object; and so the reading public in Russia had brought vividly before it the fact that human beings, of their own blood and their own faith, were serfs at the mercy of landlords, to be sold like other chattels. So the tsar was forced to free the serfs.

Turgenev settled in Paris; a great, handsome giant, a wealthy bachelor, amiable and simple, a charming literary lion. His friends were Gautier, Flaubert, and other novelists, from whom he learned the perfections of artistry, the pictorial charm, the "enamels and cameos" ideal. He had no need to learn from them the bitter and corroding despair, because that was his Russian heritage.

He wrote seven novels, all short and simple; the theme of each being the stock theme of leisure-class fiction, a man and a woman at the crisis of their love. His girls are very much alike; direct and honest, they flame up, and are ready to act upon their feelings, to go anywhere with the man they love. But the man does not know where to go or what to do. The hero of the first novel, Rudin, is a kind of modern Hamlet, who became pro-

verbial as the type of Russian intellectual. He is incapable of anything but talk, and tells the girl that they must submit to her family, which opposes the marriage.

In the other novels the heroes do not always submit. There is, for example, Bazarov, the Nihilist; he is a fighter, and ready for action—but Turgenev tells us what he thinks of man's dream of accomplishment, when Bazarov scratches his finger and dies of blood poisoning. Another hero is a Bulgarian, and there is a chance for action in Bulgaria; but unfortunately this man's lungs are weak, and he dies in the arms of the brave girl who eloped with him.

You see, it is hard for Turgenev to portray anyone who believes, because he is an artist in the leisure-class tradition of fatalism and urbane incredulity. Life is a malady; it is a malady in cruel and barbarous Russia, and no less so in free but cynical and licentious Paris. Turgenev, living safely abroad, describes heroes who also live abroad; he has not the moral courage to face Russia and the Russian problem, even in his thoughts. His people are the exiles and intellectuals, the travelers and parasites, amusing themselves in the capitals of Europe. He loathes this loafing class, and satirizes it without mercy; but also he cannot help seeing the weaknesses of the revolutionists—and the revolutionists were of course indignant at that, because they were fighting for human freedom, and thought that a man of culture and enlightment ought to help them.

So there was furious controversy over each of Turgenev's novels, and it hurt the feelings of the great, good-natured giant, and he did a lot of explaining, some of it contradictory. The truth is that he did not know quite what he believed; he was not a thinker, but merely an artist in the narrow sense of the word, one who sees what exists and portrays it with cunning skill. This makes him, of course, a darling of the leisure-class critics, art for art sakers and dilettanti. The French translations of his novels had an enormous vogue, likewise the English translations, and men like Henry James thought him a god. But out of Russia there now comes a new voice; the revolutionary proletariat is making Russia over, and the young students report themselves bored with Turgenev; he whines and moans and gets them nowhere.

You see, the Russians can now act, like other people; and so the Russian Hamlet is laid on the shelf.

## CHAPTER LXXXIV

### THE DEAD-HOUSE

A dozen years ago in Holland, talking about Dostoievski with my friend Frederik van Eeden, I remarked that I had made several attempts, but had never been able to read one of his novels through. Van Eeden replied that Dostoievski was the world's greatest novelist; and that is high praise, because van Eeden is a great novelist himself. Now, under the strain of the war, my old friend has turned into a Catholic mystic; and so I understand his passion for the dark Russian, another of those over-burdened spirits who despair of the human intellect, and seek refuge in that most powerful auto-suggestion known as God.

Feodor Dostoievski was born in a hospital, his father being a poor surgeon with a big family. As a child he knew cold and hunger, and was living in a garret when he wrote his first novel, "Poor People," at the age of twenty-four. It is a picture of two suffering, will-less creatures; and so genuine, so completely "lived," that it made an instant impression.

Its author was drawn into literary circles—which in those days meant also revolutionary circles. In his feeble way he took up the ideas of Fourier; he attended some radical gatherings, and went so far as to identify himself with a printing press. The group were arrested, and Dostoievski lay in a dungeon for many months, and finally with twenty companions was brought out upon a public square before a scaffold and prepared for death. At the last moment there came a reprieve from the tsar, but meantime one of the victims had gone insane. The shock to Dostoievski's mind was such that he comes back to the incident again and again in his books.

He was sent to Siberia at hard labor; herded with common felons, beaten and tormented—in short, receiving exactly the same treatment now meted out to social idealists by the states of California and Washington, and recently by the United States government at Leavenworth.

After a few years the tsar pardoned Dostoievski and impressed him into the army; he was allowed to come back to Russia after ten years, and wrote the story of his experiences in a book called "Memoirs of a Dead-House."

Dostoievski now took up the life of a hack writer. He had a large following, but somebody else got the money; he was always in debt, his wife and children starving and freezing. He wrote at terrific speed and never stopped to revise. He was ill all the time, suffering an attack of epilepsy every ten days. All this is in his writing; his characters are drunkards, criminals, epileptics, idiots, and neurotics of every type. He enters into their souls, and makes every moment of their lives, every mood of their unhappy beings real to us.

His greatest novel is "Crime and Punishment"; telling the story of a student who, ambitious and starving, has an impulse to murder an old woman money-lender and rob her. He commits the crime, but is too much terrified to get the money; then he is pursued by remorse, and we follow him through his inner torments. He meets a young girl who has become a prostitute in order to save her family from starvation; she persuades him to give himself up to the police, and she follows him to Siberia, and together their souls are redeemed by love.

I am conscientious in my attitude toward literature, and when I find the critics raving over a great master, I feel obliged to read him. Some years ago, I was in a hospital, recuperating from an operation, and that seemed a good time to tackle an eight hundred-page volume, so I began Dostoievski's "The Brothers Karamazov." There are several of these brothers, also an old father, and all of them are drunk most of the time, and tangled up with a stupid prostitute. The old father has money, and so has the advantage over the sons, and apparently one of the sons is on the way to murdering him. To cheer you up while the climax is preparing, there is a monastery full of monks who hate one another like poison, and one venerable and lovable saint, in whose spirituality you are expected to find hope for Russia and mankind. But this saint dies, and the youngest Karamazov brother, who loves him, has his faith in God and his hope for humanity shattered forever, because the expected miracle does not

happen—Father Zossima stinks like any other corpse!—That is as far as I got in the novel, and if you want to know the outcome, you will have to do your own reading.

This is called "realism"; but get my point clear, it is romantic and subjective to the highest degree; it is impassioned, even frenzied, propaganda. Dostoievski is an orthodox Eastern or Byzantine Christian; also he is a Slavophile, or mystical Russian patriot, believing that the Russian soul is something wonderful and special, having secret relationship with God. This relationship is the old mediaeval orgy of suffering and submission, a wallowing in repentance and self-abasement, the glorification of sores, boils, rags, lice, beggary, and bad smells. All degradation, if patiently endured, is penitential and holy, whereby the character is lifted to exalted mystical states. When the young student in "Crime and Punishment" awakens to the horror of having killed a human being, he does not decide to redeem himself by devoting his educated brain to some useful labor; no, he decides he must go to a police station and deliver himself into the hands of officials who are worse criminals that he. A government, itself the distilled essence of a billion hideous crimes, will send him to Siberia, so that he and his pious prostitute may endure ecstacies of torment.

We see this still more clearly in another novel, whose purpose is to reduce Christianity to idiocy. Do not take this for hyperbole or epigram; it is merely the statement of Dostoievski's thesis. The book is called "The Idiot," and the hero is an incarnation of that mystical, psychoneurotic Christianity which finds redemption through abasement deliberately sought. You see, it is so easy to suffer, and it is so hard to think! It is so easy to give yourself up to epileptic tremblings and terrors, and call it God! Also, it appears to be easy for literary critics to take mental disease at its own valuation.

In the whole field of art there is no spiritual tragedy greater than Dostoievski's. This man made an attempt in the cause of liberty, and the Tsardom made him into a martyr; but he came back, not to be a soldier of enlightenment, but to crawl in the dust and lick the hand which had lashed him. He came back as a propagandist of reaction, proclaiming a Russia redeemed by monks.

Well, he had his way, and the redeeming monk appeared—Gregori Rasputin by name!

Mind you, I do not quarrel with Dostoievski because he portrayed the lost and abandoned, the hopelessly sick and tortured souls he knew. I do not object because his characters are feverish and hysterical, because they stare and glare and moan and cry and leap and tremble, because their knees shake and their teeth chatter and they have nightmares filling whole chapters. I am willing to read these things; but I want to read them from the point of view of a scientist who can interpret them, or of an economist who can remedy them; I do not want to read them as an apotheosis of idiocy. I do not want them composed and idealized to prove the divine nature of epilepsy.

And when I hear perfectly sane and comfortable bourgeois critics in the United States exalting this pathologic mysticism, I want to throw a brick-bat at them. Here, for example, is Professor William Lyon Phelps of Yale University, telling us that "of all the masters of fiction both in Russia and elsewhere, Dostoievski is the most truly spiritual." At the beginning of his essay he says that this novelist "was brought up on the Bible and the Christian religion. The teachings of the New Testament were with him almost innate ideas. Thus, although his parents could not give him wealth, or ease, or comfort, or health, they gave him something better than all four put together."

"I think," says Mrs. Ogi, "that you had better take a chapter off and deal with that."

Says her husband: "I have a title already chosen—

## CHAPTER LXXXV

### THE CHRISTIAN BULL-DOG

Just what has a professor at Yale University to do with "the Christian religion"? What do "the teachings of the New Testament" really mean to him? How competent is he to judge about "masters of fiction" who are "truly spiritual"? How much sincerity is there in such literary criticism, emanating from the elm shadows of New Haven, Connecticut?

Picture a great ruling-class university, founded on "the Bible, rum and niggers"; that is to say, the African slave-trade, covered by a mantle of religiosity. The students at this university are young aristocrats, heirs-apparent of ruling-class families, who attend "prep" schools so exclusive, and with so long a waiting list that you have to make your application when you are born. In these schools they "make" certain exclusive fraternities, and when they come to Yale they "make" certain secret societies, whose spirit is symbolized by the "Skull and Bones." Their other ideal in life is to win athletic contests, whose temper they embody in the "Bull-dog."

The trustees of this pious university you will find listed according to their economic functions in "The Goose-Step." Their favorite alumnus, the high god of the present Yale religion is a three-hundred-pound plutocrat by the name of William Howard Taft, who was made president of the United States some years ago for the purpose of allowing the land thieves to get away with the natural resources of Alaska. Having fulfilled that function for his class, and having, when he came up for re-election, succeeded in carrying the states of Vermont and Utah, he was made chief justice of the Supreme Court, to serve as a bulwark of the liberties of the American people: the liberty of the individual hunky and wop to negotiate independently with the Steel Trust; the liberty of railroad directors to compel their wage-slaves to toil when the wage-slaves want to rest; the liberty of little children of Georgia crackers and North Carolina clay-eaters to work all night in cotton mills. Having solemnly delivered such pronouncements in defense of liberty, this all-highest alumnus brings his three hundred pounds to the commencement ceremonies, and walks in solemn procession clad in scarlet and purple robes.

That is Yale, and the spirit of Yale; the academic apologist of the most efficient sytem of plunder yet seen upon the face of the earth. Capitalistic exploitation is Yale's religion; and you will note that in all essentials it is identical with the religion of Rasputin and Tsar Nicholas. When the tsar's armies marched out to protect the lumber concessions of the grand dukes on the Yalu River, the priests and archbishops in the Kremlin officially blessed the ikons. And just so do chaplains of New

Haven bless the flags when the American marines set out to shoot up natives in the West Indies and Central America, for failing to pay their interest upon the bonds of J. P. Morgan and his Yale trustees.

This New England plutocracy selects with meticulous care the professors who train its young. These trainers are required to be gentlemen of the most extreme conventionality; and they are none of them drunkards, and none of them epileptics, and they do not publicly manifest their Christian sympathy for prostitutes, however beautiful in spirit. On the contrary, they wear their neckties exactly right, and understand and respect all those subtleties which mark the distinction between students who have "made" the great secret societies and students who have failed. William Lyon Phelps, "Lampson Professor of English Literature at Yale University," signs himself also "Member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters," a most august body of literary nonentities. If anyone of the characters in the novels of Dostoievski were to accompany Professor Phelps to one of the sessions of this august body, the other members would evacuate the hall. If Dostoievski himself were alive, and writing in the United States today, the masters of this august body would be just as apt to invite him to their membership as they are to invite Theodore Dreiser or Sherwood Anderson.

Very well then; what is the purpose of "the Christian religion," what is the meaning of the "spirituality" of Yale? Manifestly, it has no relationship to the young plutocrats of New England. It is an official religion, and its application is to the wealth-producing classes. Its aim is to teach American wage-slaves to kiss the hand which lashes them—precisely as poor sick Dostoievski kissed the Russian Tsardom. It is to provide a mystical basis for the American Legion—just as Dostoievski's glorification of the Slavic soul prepared the way for the "Black Hundreds." When Professor Phelps says that "the teachings of the New Testament" are better than all four of the gifts of "wealth or ease or comfort or health," he is not making a literary criticism, nor is he saying anything that he means; he is peddling the standard dope which priests and preachers of ruling classes have been feeding to the workers through a hundred thousand years.

Says Mrs. Ogi: "Some one ought to rewrite the Beatitudes according to the Bull-dog."

Says Ogi: "I have put all ten of them into one. It runs as follows: Blessed are the rich, for they have inherited the earth and you can't get it away from them."

## CHAPTER LXXXVI

### THE PEASANT COUNT

We come now to the great giant of the North, the most dynamic artist that Russia has produced. Leo Tolstoi, when he died, was not only the greatest literary man in the world; he was the incarnation to all mankind of the Russian genius and moral power. His books had been translated into forty-five languages, and read not merely by the cultured few but by the great masses. The revolution which came seven years after his death did not follow Tolstoi's principles, and he would have been shocked by many aspects of it; nevertheless it is true that, just as Rousseau brought on the French revolution, Tolstoi brought on the Russian revolution, and his invisible spirit had much to do with shaping it.

Leo Tolstoi was a member of the higher nobility. As a literary man, therefore, he started with the same advantage as Byron; the critics were ready to read his work, the public was curious about him, and all his life, whatever he did or said was "copy." His relatives and friends were high in court circles, and he was able to speak to the tsar whenever he pleased; therefore he and he alone was above the power of the police system which strangled the life of Russia.

He received a good education, according to the ruling-class standards of his time, and lived a life of elegant idleness and dissipation. But even in early youth he was tormented by religious and moral questionings. He decided that he must do something useful, so he became an artillery officer in the army of his tsar. Here he wrote an autobiographical story. "Childhood," which attracted immediate attention. Then came the Crimean war, and he wrote a series of pictures of this conflict, "Sevastopol," which made him known as a great writer.

He traveled abroad and met Turgenev in Paris; but

still his conscience troubled him, and at the age of thirty-one he went back to his estate at Yasnaya Polyana, and undertook the task of educating the peasants who tilled his fifteen thousand acres and provided his leisure and comfort. Here came the police, during his absence, and searched his house and closed the school. In those days Tolstoi was an artillery officer, and not a Christian pacifist; he sent word to the tsar by his aunt that he was armed, and if the police came to his estate again he would shoot the first one who entered the house.

Tolstoi married, and raised a large family upon this estate. His wife was a devoted admirer of his literary work, and copied his manuscripts many times over with infinite pains. During the years 1865-69 he wrote "War and Peace," which most critics consider one of the great novels of the world. I will merely record my regrets. There are a vast number of characters, scattered all over Russia; each character has several long Russian names, and, according to Russian custom, will be called different names by different groups of persons—to say nothing of diminutives and nick-names. I labored diligently to keep track of these characters, to remember which was which and what each was doing; but I failed.

Next came "Anna Karenina": a sort of Russian high-society version of "The Scarlet Letter." Anna is a woman who has been sold in the usual way to an elderly gentleman; she is a contented wife, until she meets a young cavalry officer whom she truly loves. Instead of engaging in a polite intrigue, according to the custom of her time, Anna takes the new love affair more seriously than she takes her marriage, and so Tolstoi drives her and her lover to suicide. This harshness greatly shocked the critics of the time, who said that Tolstoi was "killing flies with an ax."

There are several attitudes one can take to the problem of the "eternal triangle." You can say, as polite society said all over Europe, and still says, that adulterous intrigue is a small matter, provided you make a pretense of hiding it. Or you may say with me, that when a married woman finds she truly and deeply loves another man, it is her duty to get a divorce and marry the man she loves. Or you may say, with most of the "heavy" novelists, that

there is nothing for the various characters to do but to die horrid deaths.

Tolstoi was on the way to the great crisis of his life, a spiritual conversion which involved a complete repudiation of the sexual element in love. He decided that it was the duty of men and women to repress their physical desires and become inspired Christian ascetics. When people asked him how, in that event, the human race was to continue to be propagated, his answer was that we didn't have to worry about that, because so few people would be able to practice the code he laid down. It is difficult to see how a moral teacher could advance a doctrine more obviously absurd than that. The better elements of the race are to sterilize themselves, and posterity is to be begotten by weaklings and conscious sinners! There is only one possible explanation of such a doctrine; it is the reaction of a man whose passions are beyond his control. We know that such was the case with Tolstoi; he was a gross man, and Gorki reports that even in his old age his conversation was unbearably obscene, and his attitude toward women low. Such a man can conceive of asceticism, but he cannot conceive of true idealism in the sex relationship.

If Tolstoi's conversion had had to do with sex matters alone, it would have had but little significance. But it was something far greater than that; it was the cry of anguish of a member of the privileged classes, who realized that his whole life, all his equipment of leisure and knowledge and power, was made out of the blood and sweat and tears of the debased masses of his Russian people. He wanted to give up his landed estates, and live as a peasant, and return to the workers what he had taken from them. But, alas, in the meantime he had raised a large family, and this family had something to say about the matter. The Countess Tolstoi had been her husband's devoted helper, so long as he was content to remain a literary man; but when he wanted to become a prophet and a saint, she thought he was mad. She had the children to look out for, and the children, of course, wanted to grow up as their father had done, in the great world of pleasure and fashion.

Tolstoi himself retired to live in a hut; he put on peasant's clothes and spent his time cobbling shoes. He

gave up his copyrights, but he could never get the courage to give up his land; so he continued to grow rich, in spite of all his agonized preachings, and the balance of his life was continuous contradiction and disharmony. In the end he could stand it no longer; he saw his children quarreling over the property, like so many birds of prey over a carcass, and so he went out from his home, with no one but his secretary. For a time no one knew where he was, and at last he was discovered, ill and dying. His flight was one of the great gestures of history, and the scenes which took place about his death-bed summed up in dramatic form all the conflicting forces of the time.

Tolstoi had repudiated the Russian church as a creature of superstition and exploitation. He had gone back to primitive Christianity, and the church had excommunicated him. Now, when he was dying, they wanted to get him back, realizing that their very existence depended upon it. If they could not persuade him to confess and repent, they would lie about it, and say that he had done so, as orthodox churches have done for many other great heretics. So here were Tolstoi's friends, mounting guard in the railroad station where he lay dying, to keep the priests and the bishops away! And here also were the police agents and spies, a swarm of vermin, prying into the affairs of every person about the death-bed, and telegraphing in panic to headquarters for instructions. When the great soul had passed on, and the body had to be moved, some students tried to sing a hymn, and there were the usual scenes of brutality to which the Russian people were accustomed.

Tolstoi had met some of the revolutionists of his time, but had been cold to them; he was not interested in politics, only in religious and moral questions. His conversion first took the form of absolute non-resistance to evil. Later on he came to modify it to the doctrine which Gandhi is now spreading throughout all Asia, "non-violent resistance." You shall not use physical force against your enemy, but you oppose him by word and teaching, by your power of endurance and of moral conviction; so you shame him, or rouse the moral forces of the whole world to rebuke him.

Tolstoi applied that treatment to the state church and to the police. Of course, if he had been a peasant or

a workingman, or even a poor student or literary man, he would have been beaten to death with the knout, or shipped off to Siberia to perish in a convict camp. But he was a member of the nobility, and his family influence protected him, until he had become so famous throughout the world that he was greater than the Tsardom itself. In his last years he lived as a majestic symbol of the protest of the Russian people; he poured out arguments against war, against government cruelty, against landlordism, against priestcraft; and all the powers of darkness in Russia did not dare to lay a finger upon him.

In his later years he wrote several novels, one of which I personally consider his greatest. This is "Resurrection," which tells the story of a young Russian nobleman who seduces a peasant girl, and later on in life discovers her as a prostitute. He becomes conscience-stricken because of what he has done, and sets out to redeem her, follows her to Siberia and saves her, and in the end they live that life of brotherly and sisterly love which Tolstoi had come to preach. This story contains frightful pictures of the whole Russian system; it was translated into an immense number of languages, and it probably did more than any other one book to undermine the Tsardom.

Tolstoi published a work of criticism, and some people think that I got my ideas from it. Therefore, let me say that if you want to find the germ of "Mammonart," you will do better to consult Walt Whitman's "Democratic Vistas," published a generation before Tolstoi's work.

The thesis of Tolstoi's "What is Art?" resembles mine in just one particular; that is, we both believe that art has to do with moral questions—a belief which we share with Aeschylus and Sophocles and Euripedes and Aristophanes and Virgil and Dante and Cervantes and Moliere and Victor Hugo and Dostoievski and Tennyson and Ibsen—and so on through a long list of persons still to be considered.

But from what point of view shall the artist approach morality? Tolstoi answers as one who distrusts the intellect, distrusts science, and has no use for or belief in progress, whether social or political or intellectual. He believes that the one basis of hope for human beings is in a return to the primitive, elemental forms of life; he

wants art to confine itself to those simple emotions which can be understood by the uneducated peasant. I should say that the easiest way to make plain his thesis would be to change his title from "What Is Art?" to "What Is Children's Art?"

Whatever faults the critic may have to find with "Mammonart," I beg him to realize that its author is not a primitive Christian, but a scientific Socialist; one who welcomes the achievements of the human intellect, and looks forward to a complex social order, and to social art which will possess an intensity and subtlety beyond the power of comprehension, not merely of Russian peasants, but of the exclusive and fastidious individualist culture of our time.

## CHAPTER LXXXVII

### HEADACHES AND DYSPEPSIA

We left the French novel in the hands of Flaubert. We return now to consider the influence of two French writers, who founded the school known as "naturalism." They were contemporaries of Flaubert, but their influence counted later, for the reason that recognition was so long delayed.

Jules and Edmond de Goncourt were brothers, who collaborated in writing to such an extent that they became as one mind and one pen. Jules, the younger, died at the age of forty; his brother lived to old age. They came of an aristocratic family, and inherited a competence; they were bachelors and semi-invalids, and devoted themselves to the cause of art with a kind of ascetic frenzy. They believed that true art could be understood only by artists; but they achieved greatness in spite of that theory, because of the intensity of their sensibility, and the vitality they gave to the creatures of their brain.

It was the Goncourts who first used the term "naturalism." It was their idea that characters are built up and a story made real by infinite attention to detail. No attempt must be made to generalize, you must deal with the particular, and you must make that particular known by the massing of external circumstance. Everything must be subordinated to that purpose; the style must

be flexible, it must, like the music of the Wagnerian opera, change at every moment, according to the scene it portrays. These writers broke all the rules of French literary elegance, they used barbarous and forbidden words, so the critics ridiculed them, and the academy of Richelieu spurned them, and they had to start an academy of their own.

Their first work of significance was "Germinie Lacerteux," which tells the life history of a French serving-maid. Why should the genteel art of fiction stoop to such a heroine? The authors answer this question in a preface:

> Living in the nineteenth century, at a time of universal suffrage, and democracy, and liberalism, we asked ourselves whether what are called "the lower orders" had no claim upon the Novel; whether the people—this world beneath a world—were to remain under the literary ban and disdain of authors who have hitherto maintained silence regarding any soul and heart that they might possess. We asked ourselves whether, in these days of equality, there are still for writer and reader unworthy classes, misfortunes that are too low, dramas too foul-mouthed, catastrophes too base in their terror. We became curious to know whether Tragedy, that conventional form of a forgotten literature and a vanished society, was finally dead; whether, in a country devoid of caste and legal aristocracy, the miseries of the lowly and the poor would speak to interest, to emotion, to pity, as loudly as the miseries of the great and rich; whether, in a word, the tears that are wept below could provoke weeping like those that are wept above.

Fiction had dealt with serving-maids before this; for example, the heroine of the first great English novel, Pamela, occupies that station. But Pamela is an innocent child, and our interest is in seeing her raised to the status of a lady. The Goncourts do not tell that kind of story: quite the contrary, their serving-maid sinks to the depths of degradation. The only other novelist of this time who was writing about such "low life" was Charles Dickens. He will tell you about poverty, he will even tell you about seduction, and the sufferings of a seduced woman; but always he is a Victorian gentleman, remembering what is proper for young girls to read. The French writers, on the other hand, take up the sexual conduct and feelings of their women in the spirit of a medical clinic; they make it a matter of honor to spare

you no most hideous detail, and if you go with them you will learn all there is to know about sexual pathology.

Now this degradation exists in the world, and it is the duty of every thinking man and woman to know about it; to shrink from knowing, or from telling others about it, is to evade our mental duty. But when we have acquired this knowledge—when we have visited the hospitals and the jails and the brothels and the morgues—our minds are automatically led to the question: what is to be done about it? Not to follow this impulse is to be mentally incompetent or morally diseased.

And that is where we part company with the Goncourt brothers and their theory of art. We learn from them all about the experiences of a Paris prostitute; we learn the details of the life of a young society girl, brought up in a hot-house environment, a prey to abnormal cravings; we learn the symptoms of religious pathology, the half-sensuous hysteria of a woman in the toils of Catholic priestcraft. There are eight or ten such novels, each dealing with a different assortment of abnormalities; but nowhere in these books is there a hint of anything to be done, whether by individual conversion, the renewal of the moral forces, or by political and economic readjustments.

All such things are rigidly excluded by the "naturalist" formula; and it is essential to get clear that the Goncourt brothers, who made the formula, made it because they were sick and impotent men, the victims of a decadent stage of civilization. They thought they were giving us scientific reports upon human life, when as a matter of fact what they were giving us were the by-products of their own headaches and dyspepsias. They toiled with the devotion of martyrs to report every quiver of their nervous sensibility; Edmond watched Jules while Jules was dying—Jules even watched himself—in order to report the details of this experience. Neither of them realized that, much as the world may need information about the sensations of dying, it has even more need of information about how to live. As for the Goncourt brothers, what they needed was fresh air and exercise.

Fiction, according to this "naturalist" formula, was to become "exact science." But then, there are many kinds of science. It is science to put a beetle under the

microscope, and diagram the epidermal cells in its carapace. But science does not stop with such observation; it goes on to experiment. Supposing this beetle be dyed pink; will there be any trace of pink in its offspring, and does that prove the transmission of acquired characteristics?

We have here in California a plant wizard who raises fields of flowers and fruits and vegetables. He is not content to accumulate facts about them, but proceeds to alter them—to make cactus without spines, and blackberries as big as your thumb, and wheat that is rust-proof and peaches that are scale-proof. Will some member of the Goncourt Academy explain why the "exact science" of fiction writing might not include an effort to free human beings from alcoholism and syphilis? As it happened, the greatest disciple of the Goncourt brothers, the man who took up their formula and used it to make himself the most widely read of all French novelists, came in the end to this very conclusion, and evolved into a moralist as intense and determined as Tolstoi.

## CHAPTER LXXXVIII

### THE TROUGHS OF ZOLAISM

Emile Zola was left an orphan in childhood, and experienced bitter poverty. He began work as a bundle-clerk in a publishing house, and trained himself to be a writer at night. He knew what it was to be half-starved, and to write in bed with his fingers freezing in an unheated room. His struggle for recognition was long; for more than a score of years he wrote pot-boilers without success. But he had faith in his own genius, he was a stubborn plodder, and in his grim, sober fashion he worked his way to the top.

When I was a boy this Frenchman's name was a synonym for everything loathsome; Tennyson wrote about "wallowing in the troughs of Zolaism." This writer had used words never before used in literature, and described actions never before described; the critics could find but one explanation—that he was a vile-minded wretch. But in fact he was one of the most conscientious writers and most determined reformers that ever lived.

He wrote that "'l'Assommoir' is morality in action . . . . the first story of the people that has the true scent of the people." And he added: "I do not defend myself, my work will defend me. It is a true book."

He had set himself to tell the full truth about the world in which he lived; to portray it as it actually was, both high and low, without mercy, without fear or shame, without sparing the hideous facts. Having such a picture before you, you might make what you pleased of it; you might become a cynic or a sensualist, a saint or a revolutionist; but until you had the facts, how could you judge what you ought to become?

He planned a tremendous work, to consist of more than a score of volumes, the "Rougon-Macquart series," to tell the history of a family under the Second Empire. We are back in the time of Napoleon the Little, when Victor Hugo was driven into exile, and the French bourgeoisie set up their puppet emperor. Zola had imbibed the materialistic science of his time; he believed that human life was determined by heredity, and he wished to exhibit this force working in society. He chose two people suffering from a nervous disease, and showed their descendants, the rich ones plundering and squandering, the poor ones sunk in drunkenness and degradation.

For years the critics spurned these books, and the public neglected them; but at last came a masterpiece, "l'Assommoir," which had an enormous sale. The title means, literally, "The Slaughter-House"; it is the name of a saloon in the working-class quarter of Paris, where the poor are lured to their doom. It has been just twenty-five years since I read this book, but I still see the procession of ghastly scenes: the poor woman slave in a laundry, the husband a house-painter, and their brood of wretched, neglected children. I gasp as I see the painter slip and fall from the roof to his death; I shudder as I see the child Nana, peeping through the key-hole at the obscenities her parents are committing.

Zola has no graces of style, no charms of personality, no humor, hardly even any sentiment. He is hag-ridden by the misery of the modern world, and in plodding, matter-of-fact, relentless fashion he proceeds to overwhelm you with a mass of facts. A few such facts you might evade, but the sum of them is irresistible; you

know that this is the truth. Over the whole picture you feel the brooding pity of a master spirit, to whom these suffering millions are an obsession, haunting his imagination and driving him to his task.

There are no heroes and no heroines in Zola's works; his hero is the human swarms who breed like flies in our teeming cities, and struggle and suffer and perish, without ever a gleam of understanding of their fate. He takes us into the mining country, and in "Germinal" shows us the slaves of the pits, coal-blackened hordes, starving, oppressed, poisoned by alcohol, surging up in a blind fury of revolt. In "Nana" he shows us prostitution; and to me this is the most frightful book of all—the life-story of the little girl whom we saw getting her first lessons in vice through the key-hole. This daughter of the working class becomes their instrument of vengeance upon the exploiters; a seductress, a wanton, luring men old and young to their doom, she is a kind of symbol of wastefulness. Her life becomes a frenzy of destruction; silks, jewels, food and wine are poured upon her in floods, and she throws them about like a drunken giant wrecking a city. While she lies dying of small-pox, we hear the mob outside shrieking: "To Berlin! To Berlin!" The Franco-Prussian war is on, and Napoleon the Little is about to try out his dream of glory, and provide Zola with the theme for yet another masterpiece, "The Downfall," showing war with all its horror of mass suffering and national collapse.

Zola, raved at and prosecuted as a sensationalist and corrupter, had now become a national figure; and he met this responsibility by evolving from a materialist and fatalist into a scientific Socialist, a rationalist and preacher of humanity. He wrote three long novels, "Lourdes," "Rome" and "Paris," which exposed the church as a bulwark of hereditary privilege, and became the text-books of anti-clericalism in France. Then came the Dreyfus case, calling for a hero to carry the anti-clerical banner into action; and the man with the sewer name came forward to answer the call. France had become a republic, but the army had remained monarchist and clerical. Some of these pious aristocrats, needing money to lavish on their Nanas, had been selling army secrets to Germany, and were caught. They decided to put the blame upon

a certain cavalry officer, who happened to be guilty of a quite different crime, that of being a Jew. Captain Dreyfus was convicted, and sentenced to life imprisonment in the convict settlement on Devil's Island. Another officer, who investigated the case and attempted to defend Dreyfus, was shipped off to Africa.

It was nearly a hundred and fifty years since Voltaire had made his fight in the Calas case; and here was "l'Infame" at the same old game of the "frame-up." Zola came forward with a terrific challenge entitled "J'Accuse." He was arrested, tried and convicted, and escaped from France. For years this Dreyfus case remained an international scandal, and finally it was proved that the documents used against Zola had been forged, and later on one of the guilty men committed suicide, and Dreyfus was released and reinstated. As I write this book the papers record that Premier Herriot has abolished the penal settlement on Devil's Island, and so Zola's task is completed.

He had now become the leader of the French masses in the war against reaction; and his last novels were tracts written in this cause. In "Labor" he portrays his ideal of the free men and women of the revolutionary movement, living frugal and abstemious lives, and consecrating themselves to the cause of human emancipation. Another, called "Truth," deals with the Dreyfus case. Another had been planned, "Justice," but this he did not live to write. In all these works you notice that the old theories of materialistic science have been modified enough to permit men to fight for truth and freedom; and so Emile Zola shares with Walt Whitman the rôle of prophet of democracy. He served the masses even better than Whitman, because he achieved complete insight into the economic forces of modern times, and pointed out to the people the exact road they had to travel. More than any other artist of the nineteenth century he voiced and guided the movement of proletarian revolt, the mass action of the workers of factory and farm to whom the future belongs.

## CHAPTER LXXXIX

### THE SPORTIVE DEMON

What would Zola and his naturalism have been without social vision and revolutionary hope? This question was answered for us by a disciple and friend of Zola, ten years his junior, who proceeded to make a laboratory test.

Guy de Maupassant was a healthy young Norman animal, who came up to Paris to make his way as a journalist. He was a tremendous worker; in the course of his short life he wrote six novels and two hundred and twelve short stories. He made himself master of the latter form, and has had a dominating influence upon it. No one has been able to pack more meaning into a brief episode, to give you the whole life and import of a character in a couple of thousand words. Therefore all young writers of short stories go to school to him. What has he to give them—aside from the tricks of the trade?

Maupassant himself would have answered: Nothing. For he was one of the fighting art-for-art's-sakers, to whom the idea of morality in an art-work is an insult. But the fact is that he has a propaganda, as definite, as deeply felt, as persistently hammered home as that of a tub-thumper like John Bunyan or a prophet like Tolstoi. His message is that life is a cheat and a snare, and that human beings are beasts decked in fine clothing and pretenses. Maupassant dislikes them so that he eats himself up. He tries to believe in play, in natural, animal enjoyment of the passions; but instead of being content with such pleasures, he shuts himself up like a hermit in a cell, to acquire mastery of a difficult art, and have the satisfaction before he dies of voicing his hatred of that fate, whatever it may be, which has created his own life, and the bourgeois France which he sees about him.

Maupassant watches with eager eye and alert fancy for a scene, an episode, a trait of character, which will enable him to illustrate the pettiness and ignominy of human destiny, and the falsity of man's dignities and honors. He collects such things, as a naturalist collects biting bugs and stinging serpents. His characters are the French peasants with their greed and cruelty, and

the French bourgeois and cultured classes, who, underneath their silks and satins, their moralities and intellectualities, are the same vile animals as the peasants. But Maupassant's quarrel is not merely with men and women; it is with life itself. The thing which brings him the keenest satisfaction is an incident which shows the futility even of virtue; which exhibits God as a sportive demon, amusing himself by pulling off the wings of the butterflies he has created.

Out of the two hundred and twelve specimens in the Maupassant museum, any one will suffice. I choose one called "The Necklace," simply because it has stayed in my memory for twenty-five years. A lovely woman, married to a poor clerk, and living a starved life, borrows from a wealthy friend a beautiful diamond necklace, in order to make a show at some function. She loses the necklace, and she and her husband pledge everything they own, buy another to replace it, and take it to the owner without revealing what has happened. For ten years they slave and drudge to pay off their debts, and the lovely woman is turned into a haggard wreck. The friend who loaned the necklace meets her, and is horrified at her condition; the poor woman tells how she has drudged all these years—and learns that she has wasted her life in order to replace an imitation necklace, of no value worth considering!

There is subtlety in the technique of Maupassant, but none in his view of life. There can be no subtlety, when you lay down the law that human beings are beasts. There are only a few beast emotions, and they never vary; you can always be sure what a man will do in the presence of a woman, and what the woman will let him do. And when God is a sportive demon, all stories have the same ending. You may not foresee the particular trick this demon will play—for example, that the lost necklace would turn out to have been paste—but you can be sure that something will happen to make a mockery of all human effort and hope.

And likewise you can foresee the ending of such a man. If he takes life seriously enough to become a great artist, he is apt to take it seriously enough to act upon his convictions. He will seek refuge from despair in debauchery and drink; not finding it, he will go on to

opium and hashish. He will be one of those who from fear of death commit suicide, or who from brooding over insanity go insane. Maupassant was in a strait-jacket at the age of forty; thus proving himself a moralist, and a teacher of precious lessons: more than we can say about the art dilettanti of our own time, who write delicately perfumed impropriety, and live conventional and pampered lives upon the backs of the working class.

## CHAPTER XC

### THE FOE OF FORMULAS

Up in the gloomy, ice-bound North, where men dream about God and drink strong liquor, another teacher was engaged in undermining bourgeois morality, and raising a storm of controversy about his head. The name of Henrik Ibsen brings before us a grim-faced old man with set mouth and large spectacles and a fringe of defiant white whiskers. He was a fighting man, a dogmatic anti-dogmatist, a propagandist if ever there was one in the field of art.

He also was born of the people, and educated in the school of hardship. He was an apothecary's assistant in a small Norwegian port, then a poor student, journalist and poet, then the director of a provincial theater, which struggled for six years in a vain fight against bankruptcy. Finally, at the age of thirty-eight, Ibsen received a pension of four or five hundred dollars a year from the king, and on this he lived a stern, penurious life, raising a family, sewing the buttons on his own clothes, and making over the theater and the moral ideas of the thinking world.

Except for some pot-boilers written in his youth, all the works of Ibsen have one theme, the problem of ideals in relation to reality. Men and women form a conception of right conduct, and they try to apply it, and it doesn't work out as it is supposed to; in most of Ibsen's plays it works out exactly the opposite way. His thesis is that life cannot be guided by formulas; those of democracy are just as dangerous as those of authority; either will destroy you if you apply them blindly. Ibsen is in revolt against religious creeds and social conventions which repress the individual and thwart his full development. But

you must not assume that he is willing to make a formula out of self-realization; straightway he will turn about and show you some selfish egotist engaged in realizing himself and wrecking everyone else.

Ibsen wrote two long poems, "Brand" and "Peer Gynt," into which he put ideas resembling those of "Don Quixote." Brand is a Norwegian preacher, who has his formula of perfect righteousness, the sacrifice of the individual to God. He acts as blindly as Don Quixote tilting at wind-mills, and destroys a number of people, himself included. "Peer Gynt," on the other hand, is a scamp who, like Sancho Panza, fools himself by those very qualities of which he is most proud, his ability to take care of himself, his unwillingness to consider anything but his own interest.

Ibsen also fell under the spell of gloomy materialistic science. Like Maupassant, he sees men as the sport of circumstances. The difference is that he believes, in spite of his theories, in fighting against circumstance, and his whole being is absorbed in the task of helping men and women to fight wisely and effectively.

He took the French device of the "well-made play," a simple, unadorned picture of reality, compressing a great mass of character and incident into a small space. He used this art form to deal, not with the great world of fashion, but with the middle-class people he knew in small Norwegian towns: doctors and lawyers and clergymen and merchants, with their wives and sons and daughters. They are wretchedly unhappy people, and Ibsen shows how they make their own unhappiness, because their ideas are false, because they are slaves of traditions which have no relation to present-day reality. "The Pillars of Society" tells about a business man who makes his life a string of lies in order to hide an offense he has committed; he is helping to preserve civilization, by not letting anybody know that a business man can do wrong. "A Doll's House" tells about a woman who discovers that she is a pet and an ornament in her household, and leaves her husband and children and goes out into the world to become an individual.

There are three stages in one's attitude toward thesis plays of this sort. First, the thesis is new, and whether it pleases you or angers you, it rouses and stirs you.

Second, you know the thesis by heart, and have accepted it and lived it. At that stage the play bores you; you say that you do not go to the theater for Sunday school lessons. The third stage comes when the thesis has become so familiar that you no longer think of the play in that way; it holds you then, if it holds you at all, by the human realness of its characters and their fates.

Eighteen years ago I saw "A Doll's House" acted. I was at the second stage of development, and it seemed to me a tiresome little sermon, I could not stay to the end. But a few days later I saw "Hedda Gabler," and this was different; I forgot the thesis, and was interested in a psychological study of the modern parasitic female. We all know Hedda; some of us have been married to her. She has been brought up in idleness, she lives by vanity, she is bored, and preys upon men, not because she is sexual, but because she wants attention and applause, and cannot endure that anyone else should have these things in her presence. One of Hedda's victims is a poet; he has labored to produce a manuscript, and in his despair over her he tears it up. When Hedda hears of that she is thrilled to the depths, and cries: "A deed! A deed!" Let that be a symbol of the art-for-art's-sake attitude to life!

The greatest of Ibsen's plays is "Ghosts." It has a thesis so wicked that the critics hardly yet dare to state it. This thesis happens to be the exact opposite of the one in "The Scarlet Letter": that a true and good woman, unhappily married, who finds that she loves her clergyman, ought to elope with the clergyman instead of staying with her husband. In Ibsen's play the woman stays with her husband, and helps to make him comfortable, while he gets drunk and commits infidelities. She bears him a son, and lavishes her love and devotion upon this son, only to see him go the way of his father, and eventually die of syphilis.

This unpleasant disease had never before appeared upon the stage, and when "Ghosts" was produced in the pious city of London in the year 1891, the critics and newspapers went out of thir minds. You may find a record of their opinions in Bernard Shaw's "Quintessence of Ibsenism"; starting with the London "Daily Telegraph," which called the play "an open drain; a

loathsome sore unbandaged; a dirty act done publicly; a lazar-house with all its doors and windows open . . . candid foulness . . . bestial and cynical . . . offensive cynicism . . . melancholy and malodorous world . . . absolutely loathsome and fetid . . . gross, almost putrid indecorum . . . literary carrion . . . crapulous stuff." All this referring to a play now recognized as one of the great tragic masterpieces of all time!

"An Enemy of the People" deals with Ibsen's attitude toward politics and social questions. The "enemy" is a young doctor in a Norwegian town, who discovers that the famous baths, the basis of the town's prosperity, are infected with typhoid. The doctor insists upon making the facts public, and so of course he has an unhappy time. Curiously enough, you will find the same story in "The Goose-Step"; it happened at the University of Oregon—quite a distance from Norway. The "enemy of the people" in this latter case was a young professor, who was duly compelled to move on.

The world is forty years older than when Ibsen wrote this play; we have had time to analyze the economic forces in our society, and we are no longer satisfied with a crude distrust of democracy. It is true that the people stone the prophets; but later on they build monuments to them; and the world must be saved by the people, if it is to be saved at all. Ibsen's attitude is the natural one for an artist, who has to take care of his own mind, and does not want anyone to tell him what to think. He is distrustful of discipline, preaches individualism—and finds the reactionaries glad to quote his words. But you see, all the poet has to do is to portray the world; the masses have a more difficult job—they have to change it. So they cannot rest in the anarchist attitude; they have to have discipline and solidarity, they have to organize and find leaders, and learn to stand by those leaders, and at the same time to control them. All that is a new task, and calls for new types of thinkers, not merely critical, but constructive.

## CHAPTER XCI

### THE BIOLOGICAL SUPERIOR

Sweden also had a great dramatist and poet in this nineteenth century. He came some twenty years later than Ibsen, a tormented and highly emotional man of genius, who just about boxed the compass of thought, and believed everything there was for a man to believe. He was too much of a propagandist, even for me; I like an artist to have ideas, but not so many that they contradict!

August Strindberg's father was a bankrupt shopkeeper; his mother was a bar-maid, and three illegitimate children had preceded him. He was raised in a family of eleven in a small house, and the first emotions he knew were fear and hunger. He was lonely and unhappy all his life, and poured out his troubles in a torrent over Sweden.

He began writing at twenty-one; he had the artist's passion for all kinds of knowledge, and in those early days he was a Socialist and a champion of labor, also of the economic emancipation of women. But at the age of twenty-six he chose a wife, and illustrated the formula we used to sing in childhood:

> Needles and pins, needles and pins,
> When a man marries his trouble begins!

His wife bore him some children, and then wished to resume her career as an actress. Strindberg objected to this, and they quarreled, and after seven years they parted. The poet considered this an irremediable tragedy; for he held a mystical idea, that marriage is an actual union of flesh and spirit, and to tear a couple apart is to maim them both. Strindberg put his agony into a book, "The Confessions of a Fool"; a ghastly record, yet one can hardly keep from smiling over it. The author preaches the doctrine that woman is inferior to man; he pounds upon this theme—and then proceeds to tell you marital incidents which make it clear that the woman was fully a match for him!

Strindberg believes that woman is inferior, not merely physically, intellectually and morally, but biologically;

she is a half-way creature between man and child, and it is her duty to submit herself in all things to the biologically superior male. But nature for some reason has failed to inform her that she is inferior, and the perverse creature insists upon trying to act as if she were equal; so everything goes to wreck. Somebody said that Herbert Spencer's idea of a tragedy was a generalization killed by a fact. Strindberg's tragedy was the same, but he never recognized it; he clung to his generalization, not merely through this marriage, but through two others, which failed in the same way, and for the same reason.

It is true that some women are predatory; it is true that a great many women abuse the power they get. That may be expected of every enslaved race or class or sex. But the only way to become fit for power is to exercise it, and the only way to get it is to take it. The women who broke Strindberg's three marriages were like the suffragettes with hammers; they were using the only arguments their opponents would heed. As a result of their efforts, some of us now live in a happier time, having comrade-wives who do not abuse their share of power, but co-operate with their husbands in carrying the burdens of life.

But whatever you think about Strindberg's biological superiority, you cannot deny the power of the tragedy he wrote upon his thesis. It is called "The Father," and shows a man undermined and destroyed by a cunning, determined woman, who sets out to break him to her will. Also you have to admit the reality of "Miss Julia," which portrays the degeneracy of the ruling classes in Sweden. This high-born young lady, who starts an intrigue with a man-servant in her household, might be a page out of a "yellow" Sunday supplement in America.

Strindberg came close to the line of insanity; he spent two or three years in a sanitarium, and wrote a book about these borderland states, "Inferno." Then he took up with Swedenborg, and evolved into a Christian mystic, and went back into a second childhood of bible-worship. But that did not keep him from carrying on frantic quarrels with his enemies, and pouring out many volumes of personalities. Strangely enough, there is a kind of impersonality in it all, because the man is so tragically earnest. He is trying to find the truth, and puts himself before us

as a document; no one but Rousseau has done this so completely. Therefore, we think of Strindberg as one of the great teachers. Let the artist give us truth, and we can always find use for it.

## CHAPTER XCII

### THE OVERMAN

Another great writer of this time was troubled about the problem of the ladies. August Strindberg married three, and experienced three tragedies. Friedrich Nietzsche sought to marry one, but she would not have him; after which he wrote contemptuously of them all. Despite the fact that he was a clergyman's son, he suffered from hereditary syphilis, and went insane—a tragic waste of the greatest genius of modern times.

Nietzsche was born in 1844, and became a professor of philology at a Swiss university. His health broke down from eye-strain at the age of thirty-five, and he retired upon a small pension. His insanity came at the age of forty-five, and he lived eleven years longer, slowly rotting to pieces, and meantime growling like a wild beast.

Nietzsche's enemies, of course, made the most of this cruel fate; they said that he was insane all the time. That is an easy way to dispose of his writings—easy for the average person, who has never experienced such emotional states as Nietzsche dealt with, and does not wish to be troubled by them. But a few who have experienced these states are in better position to decide. Nietzsche's mature work is perfectly sane; it contains many contradictions, but we have to permit an original mind to grow. His masterpiece, "Thus Spake Zarathustra," contains the greatest imaginative writing of several centuries.

But we must remember that these books were written by a man who was ill and suffering atrociously. He declared that every year meant for him two hundred days of pain. His view of life is the product of a pain-driven mind, like the ecstasy experienced by martyrs undergoing torture. We do not expect ordered and systematic thought from such persons; but we may learn from them strange secrets concerning the possibilities of the human spirit.

One of Nietzsche's doctrines is the exaltation of the

aristocratic over the democratic virtues. He was the son of a Prussian state pastor, and he glorified war, and was taken as the spiritual director of the invasion of Belgium. It would be easy for me to deal with him on that basis, and draw and quarter him amid general acclamation. The only trouble is that Nietzsche is one of the pioneers of the moral life, a conqueror of new universes for our race.

There are two sides to his message, the positive and the negative. On the positive side it is the record of an exalted poet, proclaiming brotherhood, service, and consecration. On its negative side it represents the fears and repugnances of an invalid, shrinking from life which was too much for him, and seeking refuge in his own visions, where he could be master without interference from a hostile world. Where Nietzsche loved something, you will generally find it something great and noble; where he hated something, you will often find it a thing he failed to understand. There were two subjects upon which he was entirely ignorant; the first woman, and the second economics. This double ignorance distorted all his thought, and has brought it about that his influence counts on the side of the forces he hated.

Nietzsche agreed with the proposition of the present book, that all the arts are propaganda. He showed how those who were able to face life and to conquer made themselves a philosophy and art of self-assertion and development; those who were afraid of life made a philosophy and art of self-sacrifice and renunciation. Nietzsche explained Christianity as a slave religion, evolved by the victims of Roman imperialism; he proclaimed himself Antichrist, and advocated a "master morality."

Nietzsche's supreme contribution is the interpretation of evolution; he became the prophet and seer of this doctrine, developing a concept of the Overman, a higher being into which the human race is destined to evolve. Bernard Shaw has popularized the term Superman; but I venture to stick to Overman, which I used in "The Journal of Arthur Stirling," several years before "Man and Superman" was published. Nietzsche might have chosen the term "Supermensch" if he had wished; but he wrote "Uebermensch."

This concept Nietzsche set forth in "Zarathustra" with

fervor and splendor of imagery, a chant the like of which the German language had never known before. Ten years ago, editing "The Cry for Justice," made up of the world's revolutionary literature from thirty languages and five thousand years of history, I gave the last place to a quotation from "Zarathustra"; the reason being that it represents to me the ultimate of modern thought, the greatest words in recent poetry. I quote a portion of this passage:

> Man is a cord, tied between Beast and Overman—a cord above an abyss.
>
> A perilous arriving, a perilous traveling, a perilous looking backward, a perilous trembling and standing still.
>
> What is great in man is that he is a bridge, and no goal; what can be loved in man is that he is a going-over and a going-under.
>
> I love them that know not how to live, be it even as those going under, for such are those going across.
>
> I love them that are great in scorn, because these are they that are great in reverence, and arrows of longing toward the other shore.

You will note that these paragraphs celebrate the fame of the martyrs, those who sacrifice themselves for the race. Are we not here right back in the spirit of Jesus? I do not mean Christianity, the thing that is taught in churches, the creeds of the other-worldly; I am referring to the revolutionary carpenter, who taught brotherhood in its high heroic sense, and proclaimed the kingdom of heaven upon earth.

Nietzsche wrote and taught in that same heroic sense; but because of his two great ignorances, concerning women and concerning economics, he could not make distinctions, and save his message from being interpreted in the interest of class greed and materialism. When we see the image of Jesus set up in gold and jewels, and carried forth to bless wholesale murder for the profit of the Russian Tsardom, or of J. P Morgan & Company's international loans, we are witnessing one of mankind's historic tragedies. We are witnessing another when the message of Friedrich Nietzsche is taken up by Bernhardi and the Prussian Junkers, and used to sanctify that power which during the war I described as "the Beast with the Brains of an Engineer."

Nietzsche loathed the Prussian Junkers, and the whole

Prussian state machine. He lived the life of an ascetic, and wrote in spiritual terms; when he talked about the "strong," he meant those that are great in reverence as well as in scorn. But he could not analyze the different kinds of competition in which social beings engage; he could not distinguish between those which encourage intellectual progress and those which strangle it. He saw that in primitive societies war eliminates the degenerate; he did not perceive that in modern capitalist society war has exactly the opposite effect, preserving the weaklings and parasites, and putting commercial hogs in power. Neither did he perceive how a system of hereditary privilege enthrones the sensualists and idlers, the human types he most despised. While young he came under the influence of Richard Wagner; he read that pernicious secret document which Wagner had prepared for his friend King Ludwig, explaining it as the duty of the artist to devise illusions to keep the masses patriotic and religious. Nietzsche absorbed that doctrine and it poisoned his social thought for life.

I have met with ridicule from sapient critics for praising Zarathustra and at the same time proclaiming myself a Socialist. But just as it is possible by a deeper view to reconcile Zarathustra and Jesus, so also it is possible to reconcile Zarathustra and Marx. The free spirits and lofty idealists whom Nietzsche dreamed will never be able to function in the world of international profiteers; they are outcasts in such a world, as Nietzsche was in the Junker world. Only when competition for money has been replaced by co-operative order will mankind take seriously those higher activities which were Nietzsche's concern.

Exactly the same thing applies to the war of the sexes; it is not in quarreling with women, like Strindberg, or in avoiding them, like Nietzsche, that the happiness of man is found. There is a saying of Zarathustra most frequently quoted by his enemies: "When thou goest to woman forget not the whip." That is taken to mean that man should dominate woman by brute power; but Georg Brandes tells me that it does not mean that at all. It means that you must not forget that the woman will seek to wield a whip over you if she can; in other words, the Strindberg terror! Brandes declares that he has seen a

photograph of Nietzsche in company with the young lady whom he loved; Nietzsche in this photograph had a child's harness about his neck and shoulders, and the woman had a whip in her hand. That, of course, was play; but Freud has taught us that play is symbolic, and perhaps it was this picture which Nietzsche had in mind when he wrote his famous sentence.

Anyhow, this much is certain: Nietzsche did not know women. Except for this one unhappy love affair, he took toward them the same attitude as the Christian hermits and monks—and for the same reason, because he wanted to live his inner life without disturbance. So extremes meet, and history repeats itself—the "eternal recurrence" which Nietzsche taught! Through much of his life he had the devoted services of his sister; she nursed him and cared for him during those dreadful years when he wandered about the room growling like a wild beast; and after he was dead, she edited his books and his letters. Man flees from woman—but he begins in a woman's arms, and he ends there.

## CHAPTER XCIII

### THE OCTOPUS CITIES

Modern civilization is a stepmother to poets; it is crowded, noisy and ugly, and they run away and seek refuge in gardens, or monasteries, or dreams of a happier past. But modern civilization is alive; it is the life of hundreds of millions of human beings, forging a new future. And there comes a new kind of poet, able to penetrate to the inner spirit of that future.

It was fitting that such a poet should be a Belgian; for Belgium is the center of the new industrialism in Europe. Here are great iron and steel plants, and vast cobwebs of railroads, and harbors to which the commerce of the world pours in. The past and the future meet here, for Belgium has an old history and art; it is a battleground of Catholicism and Protestantism, of modern science and ancient mysticism, of French revolution and German autocracy. It is wealthy, with all the class contrasts and antagonisms which modern capitalism brings.

Emile Verhaeren was born in 1855, of well-to-do re-

tired parents. He lived in the country, but in Belgium the country is close to the towns, and the boy saw the river with the great ships, the factories and the busy artisans, a teeming life, stimulating to the imagination. He was educated in a Jesuit school, where they hoped to make a priest of him, but did not succeed. He studied law, and led a wild, freakish youth. He had been writing verses since childhood, Latin verses, and then the classical French Alexandrines, under the spell of Victor Hugo. Then came Zola, and young Verhaeren horrified his parents and friends by a volume of poetry portraying the violent and brutal facts of Flemish life. They are a gross and drunken people—we see them in the paintings of Rubens; and it was a time when young poets were in revolt against false idealism, and wanted to deal with reality, the more crude and hideous the better.

From excess of animalism the Belgian people revolt to the other extreme, asceticism; so the country is full of monks, gloomy and sober, living apart and contemplating the past with holy awe. Verhaeren wrote a second book, in which he portrayed strange types of these devotees. But he was content to admire them; he did not join them.

The poet exists by virtue of the fact that he is more sensitive than the average man; life hits him harder blows, and he flies from one extreme to the other. Modern science took from Verhaeren his Catholic faith, and there followed a period of pessimism, a terrible psychic crisis. Like Dostoievski and Strindberg, he came close to the border-line of insanity and suicide. But his restless mind would not give up to any suffering; he was thrilled even by the adventure of pain; he loved life, even though it held for him only the vision of death. All things are themes for art; so he wrote a book of nightmares, a pilgrimage of neurasthenia.

The sick poet had fled from the noisy and brutal world; he found his deliverance by coming back to it. Redemption lay in loving and understanding mankind in its manifold new activities. Those things which the poets generally affect to despise Verhaeren now took up with ecstasy: industrialism, machinery, the roar of cities, the manifold activities of crowds, in all these things he discovered a new power, promising an infinitude of beauty.

Verhaeren wrote in French, and used a new form of rhymed free verse, more obviously rhythmical than Whitman's, marvelously responsive to every throb of the poet's imagination. It is a kind of verse to chant aloud, an utterance of sweeping ecstasy. Verhaeren resembles Whitman in many ways; in his identification of himself with the toiling masses, his sense of the multitude as a new being, a thing with a life of its own. Like Whitman he accepts the universe, he sings the chant of humanity becoming God, conquering nature, and remaking existence in its own image.

Walt Whitman sang "these states," and saw them as one mighty, triumphant land. Verhaeren also had a vision, he was the prophet of the United States of Europe. He had lived in all its great capitals, and knew and interpreted the forces which were bringing them together and making them one. Terrible places they are—"the octopus cities," he calls them in the title of one of his volumes, and portrays them as gigantic tentacular monsters, sucking all the life-blood from the country. No poet has ever approached Verhaeren in the portrayal of the cruelty and loneliness and horror of these capitalist cities. You will find in "The Cry for Justice" a translation of one of these poems, the most frightful picture of prostitution ever given in verse.

Verhaeren welcomed science, and proclaimed mass solidarity, the surrender of the individual to the sweep of progress. He became a prophet and preacher of what he called "cosmic enthusiasm." He was, of course, a Socialist and revolutionist. He wrote a lyrical drama called "The Dawn," which has been translated into English by Arthur Symonds. Here in a mixture of prose and verse he celebrates a hero who surrenders the citadel of capitalism to the masses, and gives his life in the effort to abolish class conflict and build the happy future. Verhaeren wrote other plays which have not yet been translated or produced; they do not conform to the rules of the drama for profit, for they deal with humanity and not with sex. But the new time is coming—and here is one of its prophets.

## CHAPTER XCIV

### THE INSPIRED PARRAKEET

I remember the first poet I ever met in my youth; one of the "pure" poets, a dreamy soul, who lived in the ugly city of New York, and wrote about beauty in distant Nineveh and Tyre. He earned his living in a book-store, where he faded slowly, and his hair came to look as if the moths had been feeding on it. Only once I saw fire in his eyes, and that was when the name of Swinburne was mentioned. "Swinburne is a *god!*" he exclaimed.

Yes, Algernon Charles Swinburne is no mere poet; he is divinity, before whose high altar the art-for-art's-sakers perform obeisance. He was born in 1837, of an aristocratic county family in the North of England. So he always had plenty of money, and lived his own life in the aristocratic fashion. They sent him to Eton at the age of twelve, and then to Oxford, but respectability failed to "take" with him.

He was the strangest figure in which the soul of a poet was ever housed. As a child he had been beautiful, but something must have gone wrong with his glands, so that his head grew faster than his body. He developed a noble brow, but a weak mouth and receding chin; his enormous head was lighted by two bright green eyes, and covered with a shock of vivid red hair. When he became excited, which he was liable to do at a moment's notice, his arms and legs began to jerk convulsively, and he would rush about the room, orating vehemently, perhaps hopping upon the sofa, like a bright-colored parrakeet. He was an omnivorous reader, and knew all the poetry there was in the world—most of it by heart, and would pour it out by the hour, in Latin, Greek, French, Italian or English. If he became too much excited, he would suddenly have a fit and fall unconscious, to the terror of the company; but after a while he would come to, just as lively and full of words as ever.

In his childhood and youth, according to the English custom, they filled him up with Greek and Latin verses; he absorbed the bad as well as the good, wine and women as well as song. Then he came under the spell of Victor Hugo, who filled him with a fervor for liberty. It is an

interesting illustration of the influence a great poet can exert. Swinburne worshipped Hugo with frenzied extravagance, and remained a disciple of republicanism all through his seventy-two years; and this without the slightest actual contact with republicanism, without anything in his environment or his actions to explain such revolutionary fever.

Worldly impracticability was carried to its last extreme in this combustible youth; he always had to have somebody to take care of him, and fell under the spell of one personality after another: Rossetti, William Morris, Mazzini, and finally Watts-Dunton, who literally saved his life. Swinburne would come up to London and engage in what he called "racketing"—by which he meant stimulating his frenzies with alcohol. He would keep this up until he was completely prostrated, and then his father or one of his friends would carry him off to the country and mount guard over him, and there he would live a quiet and placid literary life until the world lured him forth again. By the time he was forty he had carried his dissipation to such extremes that he was all but wrecked. One by one his friends had to give him up, and he was living in wretched lodgings at the point of death.

It was then that Watts-Dunton took charge of his affairs once for all, and turned his country house into a sort of literary sanitarium, and kept the poet for thirty years, strictly forbidding any but respectable citizens to call upon him. Here the queer little parrakeet hopped about in the library, and gradually grew old and deaf, and wrote a great deal of prose and verse of little consequence. Some critics fight with the moralists over the question, Is it better for a poet to die drunk and inspired, or to live sober and dull? My friend, George Sterling, writes me on this point: "I still refuse, probably from personal experience, to believe that alcohol helps the artist to function at his best."

Swinburne's first great work, published at the age of twenty-eight, was an imitation Greek play, "Atalanta in Calydon." As poetry it is marvelous; nobody since Shelley had poured out such a torrent of glorious words. All the tricks of the trade are in it—how many you can learn from Professor Saintsbury, who lists them: "equivalence and substitution, alternative and repetition, rhymes and

rhymeless suspension of sound, volley and check of verse, stanza construction, line- and pause-moulding, foot-conjunction and contrast." Such are the weapons in the armory of those who have read all the poetry there is in the world!

What else is there beside verbal splendor and technical tricks? The answer is: The familiar Greek aristocratic personages, struggling in vain against their gods; the old Greek fatalism and pessimism, taken up as a literary exercise and carried to un-Hellenic extremes. It might have puzzled you, perhaps, that a poet of republicanism and revolt should also be a poet of pessimism; but you would have been ill-advised to ask the question of Swinburne, for once, when a friend ventured to criticize his work, he stared for a moment or two of horror, then uttered a shrill scream, and rushed upstairs to his room, and seized his manuscript and spent hours tearing it into shreds and throwing it into the fire—and then spent the rest of the night rewriting it from memory!

Swinburne could not think, he could only feel, and so he was capable of pouring his poetic frenzy into absolutely contradictory ideas. So we have these magnificent choruses of "Atalanta," in which man's despair at his own fate is voiced with overwhelming poignancy:

> For a day and a night and a morrow,
> That his strength might endure for a span
> With travail and heavy sorrow,
> The holy spirit of man. . . .
> He weaves, and is clothed with derision;
> Sows, and he shall not reap;
> His life is a watch or a vision
> Between a sleep and a sleep.

But then, if that be true, what is the use of struggling for liberty and overthrowing tyrants? What indeed is the use of writing beautiful verses and reading proofs and wrangling with publishers and critics? Manifestly, no use whatever. Nevertheless, Swinburne would read a news item about Napoleon the Little, and he would fly into another frenzy, and write a poem in which he called for the blood of tyrants. He collected all these into his "Songs before Sunrise," which constitute one of the bibles of liberty. When I meet an art-for-art's-saker, I never fail to ask him if he has read Swinburne's "Prelude," in

which the poet describes his conversion to the cause of human service.

> Play then and sing; we too have played,
> We likewise, in that subtle shade.
> We too have twisted through our hair
> Such tendrils as the wild Loves wear,
> And heard what mirth the Mænads made.

Such has been the poet's life; but now he has reformed, and taken up the duty of passing on the light of the intelligence to his fellows:

> A little time that we may fill
> Or with such good works or such ill
> As loose the bonds or make them strong
> Wherein all manhood suffers wrong.

And that leads us by a natural transition to the "Marching Song," a battle-cry of the revolution:

> Rise, ere the dawn be risen;
> Come, and be all souls fed;
> From field and street and prison
> Come, for the feast is spread;
> Live, for the truth is living; wake, for night is dead.

"My other books are books," Swinburne declared, "but 'Songs before Sunrise' is myself." His respectable biographer, Edmund Gosse, is both puzzled and shocked by this, and points out how completely Swinburne's hopes of republicanism have failed to be realized in the modern world. Yes; the poet failed to see that the lords of finance, the fat men of the bourgeoisie, would subsidize autocracy and subsidize superstition, as a means of riveting slavery upon the human mind and body for another century. But let Professor Gosse take care of his health for a few years more, and he may see that Daylight which was heralded in the "Songs before Sunrise."

We have stepped ahead of our story and omitted to mention Swinburne's earlier volume of miscellaneous work, "Poems and Ballads," which was published shortly after "Atalanta," and gave the Victorian age the worst shock of its existence. This was the time of Tennyson at his most mawkish, the time of "Maud" and "Enoch Arden"; literary England had not seen anything really indecent since Byron's "Don Juan," nearly half a century ago. But here came this young aristocrat—the son of an

admiral, and therefore beyond prosecution for anything that he might do—throwing out upon the world an inspired glorification of sexual and alcoholic riot.

Swinburne was, of course, just as sincere in his praise of Venus and the vine as he was in his praise of liberty; more sincere, in fact, because he practiced what he preached in the former case, but he omitted to go off and die in the cause of liberty as Byron had done. Some of his licentious poetry is perfect from the technical point of view; but, on the other hand, "Poems and Ballads" contains the worst combination of words ever put into a poem: "the lilies and languors of virtue and the roses and raptures of vice." It is pleasant to be able to record that Swinburne had the wit to ridicule his own habit of silly alliteration; see the parody called "Nephelidia": "From the depth of the dreamy decline of the dawn through a notable nimbus of nebulous noonshine," and so on.

In "Thus Spake Zarathustra" there is a doctrine of freedom, which is summed up: I ask you, not free *from* what, but free *to* what? And that is what I should like to point out to young poets who uncritically accept Swinburne as a god. It is possible to be entirely free to do what you please, and yet not please to do many silly and destructive things. Young poets are free to write as eloquent verses as they know how; and they may put into those verses a celebration of all things beautiful and just and noble in the world. On the other hand, they may put in a celebration of debauchery; and they may try it out for themselves, and fall slaves to alcohol and drugs, and end in the mad-house or a suicide's or drunkard's grave—like Baudelaire and Verlaine and Musset and Poe and Dowson, and that brilliant, unhappy genius whose story we have next to read.

## CHAPTER XCV

### THE GREEN CARNATION

Eight years ago Frank Harris published his two volumes entitled "Oscar Wilde: His Life and Confessions." I wrote him that it was one of the half dozen greatest biographies in the English language, and he replied, characteristically: "Name the other five." That story never

fails to raise a laugh; but in fairness to Frank Harris I ought to add that when I sat down and thought it over seriously I could not name the other five. Here is the story of a terrific human tragedy, told plainly and completely, with profound insight and deep pity. How can the man who wrote it not know that it is great?

The subject of this sermon in action was born in Dublin in 1854. His father was a wealthy baronet, a physician who was accustomed to seduce his women-patients; his mother was an excessively vain society poetess. The son was burdened with the label Oscar Fingal O'Flahartie Wills Wilde, and received the usual public school and Oxford education. In these so-called "public" schools, which are ruling class boarding-schools, the boys live semi-monastic lives, entirely withdrawn from woman's influence; they are fed upon Greek literature and art, which glorifies homosexuality, and therefore English upper-class life is rotten with this odious vice. Frank Harris narrates that at the time of Wilde's trial, when general exposures on this subject were threatened, great numbers of London's prominent club members suddenly discovered that they had important business on the Continent.

Oscar Wilde had extraordinary gifts; a vivid imagination, a flow of eloquence, and charming wit. He was the perfect fine flower of leisure-class art, a gentleman about town, a literary dandy who learned the lesson that it pays to advertise, and made himself the most talked about man in London by dressing in knee breeches and silk hose, carrying a large sunflower in his hand, and greeting men and women with sweet impertinences. There is a satiric portrait of this elegant "esthete" in Robert Hichens' novel, "The Green Carnation."

Oscar wrote comedies dealing with the London world of fashion in which he lived. These plays delighted that world, and still delight audiences of the fashionable. Frank Harris regards them as imperishable classics; and all I can do is to record the fact that they put me to sleep. Nearly twenty years ago I saw "The Importance of Being Earnest" in New York, and cannot recall that I was ever more bored in a theater. The interest of the play is supposed to lie in its "smart" dialogue, and the formula for that smartness is one which anyone can learn in two minutes. Take any statement involving the simple com-

mon sense of mankind, the moral heritage of the race for countless ages; and then make an epigram proclaiming the opposite, and you have a "line" for a society play. "Charity creates a multitude of sins. . . . It is better to be good-looking than to be good. . . . All charming people are spoiled. . . . A man can be happy with any woman as long as he does not love her. . . . It is a dangerous thing to reform anyone. . . . The real drawback to marriage is that it makes one unselfish. . . . Democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people. . . . There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. . . . The sphere of art and the sphere of ethics are absolutely distinct and separate."

A man who is absorbed in useful work, and therefore has few impulses to depravity, can encounter such Wildeness with indifference; but the average man, who is never sure of his own self-control, and who has sons and daughters to train in as much decency as he can, is made frantic by such perversity, the deliberate bedeviling of the wits of our blindly struggling humanity. These "epigrams" of Oscar Wilde are like the snapping of a whip-lash in the face of men's everyday moral sensibility. So naturally this too-clever young esthete was cordially loathed, and his enemies whetted their knives for him.

Oscar came over to America to exhibit his whimsicalities to the wives and daughters of our steel kings and pork packers. To the custom's officer he remarked: "I have nothing to declare but my genius"; and so his success was assured. He went back to London and wrote more plays, one of them, "Salome," assuredly the most cruel, cold, and disgusting piece of lewdness in the English language. Its heroine is the young daughter of King Herod, who attempts to seduce John the Baptist to her sensual desires, and when he repels her, has him executed, and has his head brought in upon a platter, and strips herself as nearly naked as stage-customs allow, and dances before this bloody object and fondles and kisses it. The climax of modern art depravity was reached when Richard Strauss set this drama to elaborate and costly music. When I saw audiences of bedizened and bejewelled fat beasts, male and female, having their sick nerves thrilled

by this "grand" opera, I knew that European capitalism was ready for the slaughterman's ax.

Out of these plays Oscar reaped much money, and spent it in eating too much, drinking too much, and pursuing his cultured vices. Among his favorites was a young heir of the nobility, who has since become Lord Alfred Douglas, assuredly the most disagreeable little wretch that ever displayed himself in the British world of letters. Lord Alfred's father, the Marquis of Queensbury, made an effort to separate his son from Wilde, and in so doing he wrote letters concerning Wilde which brought about a great literary scandal.

It is the privilege of elegant British gentlemen to pursue their vices without interference; but they must display discretion, and not step upon the toes of marquises. Oscar Wilde brought suit for slander against Queensbury; and his lordship rallied his aristocratic friends, defended himself successfully, and then had the audacious playwright arrested and prosecuted for sodomy.

The ordinary British citizen had, of course, no knowledge of the inside circumstances of this case; all he saw was that a writer of nasty plays tripped jauntily into the limelight and brought a libel suit against a father for trying to save his son. Of the fact that the father was a bad one, and the son worse, and that the courts were being used to maintain a corrupt ruling class—those things the average Englishman did not know. He will never know them until there is a Socialist daily press in England, with the right to tell the truth about the ruling class, something which at present the libel laws prevent.

Here is material for a drama, far greater than any that Wilde wrote; and Frank Harris gives us the whole story. In the early part of it he sees Oscar clearly as the pitiful victim of his own will-less nature; but when the tragedy of this nature reaches its climax, Harris lets himself be tempted into offering Wilde to us in a new rôle, that of a persecuted hero and martyred genius. Much as Harris may abhor Oscar's sin, he abhors the leading British virtues still more; so he is in the position of Milton dealing with Satan—he cannot keep from sympathizing with his character, in spite of logic. To be sure, he gives us the facts, so that we can judge for ourselves, if we have the brains; and we must try to be worthy of that trust!

It seems evident enough that Oscar was sent to prison, not because of his genius, nor yet because of his vices, but simply because he attacked in a conspicuous and aggravating way a member of the hallowed ruling caste of Britain. You may call that turning the tragedy into a Socialist tract; but a man cannot interpret any case of social persecution unless he sees its economic implications —unless, in other words, he understands the class struggle. If Frank Harris had been a conscious social revolutionist, his book would have been more powerful and convincing, because he would have been less tempted to blame individuals for evils which are social in their origin. He would have given us an economic interpretation of Oscar, the spoiled darling of a putrescent leisure class, thrown overboard, like Jonah, as a sacrifice in a middle-class hurricane of virtue.

Oscar Wilde was convicted and sent to prison; and of course Frank Harris does not like prisons—he, too, has been sent there by the British ruling caste. It is only natural that he should overlook in his book the significance of the fact which he himself records, that this imprisonment was the best thing that ever happened to Oscar. Harris interceded for him, and was able to get him good food and the right to have his books; he tells us that he noticed during his visits a "spiritual deepening" in Oscar, due to the rigid disciplining of his selfish nature. He was never so well or so much in possession of his mental faculties as when he came out; but immediately he went back to his vomit, and ate and drank and loafed himself to death, according to the customs prevailing in that putrescent leisure class.

It seems to me that the true conclusion to be drawn from Frank Harris' book is that decadent poets should be sent to prison and kept there permanently. Anything to save them from smart society! While Oscar was at large, the pet of the cultured rich, he idled and wrote futile plays; but when he was locked up, he took life seriously, and wrote great literature: "De Profundis," a study of his spiritual reactions to his disgrace; and "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," a supremely eloquent and noble poem, the poet's excuse for having lived.

Reading these two works we say, by all means let us have prisons for will-less men; places where such unhappy

beings may have as much self-government as they can use, together with plain wholesome food, moderate work outdoors, and enforced abstinence from alcohol and tobacco and drugs. Having set up such prisons, let us keep in them, not merely all thieves and highwaymen and esthetes, but men of fashion, princes, lords and dukes, bishops, stock-brokers and fat persons.

Says Mrs. Ogi: "You said you were going to label all your jokes."

Her husband, after meditating, remarks: "What Oscar needed was the right sort of a wife."

She answers: "Almost any wife would have told him that a guilty man cannot bring a slander suit."

## CHAPTER XCVI

### THE WHITE CHRYSANTHEMUM

"What troubles me," says Mrs. Ogi, "is that you call this a book of all the arts, and continue to deal with literature."

"In modern times each of the arts has developed a complicated technique; and in order to analyze them all and show what they mean, one would have to know much more than I know. But every now and then it happens that a musician or painter or sculptor is not satisfied with his own art, but uses mine; and then I have him!"

"Oh, that mine enemy would write a book," says Mrs. Ogi.

James McNeill Whistler wrote a book; he gave it a title: "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies as Pleasingly Exemplified in Many Instances, Wherein the Serious Ones of this Earth, Carefully Exasperated, Have Been Prettily Spurred on to Unseemliness and Indiscretion, While Overcome by an Undue Sense of Right." The pages of this book are covered with butterflies which the painter adopted as the signature for his work. These butterflies are defiant, care-free, insolent; manifestly, some one has taken great pains with them, and with the volume through which they flutter. Studying it, we learn what kind of man it takes to succeed as a leisure-class portrait-painter.

Whistler was born in Boston, his father being a major

in the United States Army. We have seen him "let out" from West Point; he was "deficient in chemistry." He went to Paris and lived the Bohemian student life for some years, and imbibed those ideas concerning the non-moral nature of art, which are a symptom of the disintegration of our ruling classes.

Whistler settled in London. He was unknown and an American; he had new ideas about painting, and the Royal Academy would have nothing to do with him, so he had to fight his way. A fiery little man, with wavy black locks and one very singular white lock over his forehead, he trained his eyebrows to stand out fiercely, and wore a little imperial and a monocle, and carried a very long cane, and a white chrysanthemum always in his buttonhole. He cultivated truculence, and his life was a succession of conspicuous libel suits and public quarrels, kept alive by letters to the newspapers.

To a little group of his intimates Whistler could be a charming companion and host; but when he went out into the world, he put on armor like a hard-shelled crab, and was ready to bite the head off the first person who got in his way. He would hit a man in the eye for differing with him indiscreetly; once in a theater he beat a critic over the head with his cane. In deadly seriousness he challenged George Moore to a duel, and appointed seconds, and published Moore's failure to reply. Because he was dissatisfied with the price paid him for the portrait of a certain lady, he painted out the lady's face. He undertook to decorate a dining-room for a wealthy shipowner, and became fascinated with the idea of covering walls and ceiling with an endless number of peacocks in gold and blue. He worked over this in a frenzy for months. The shipowner wanted his house, but could not have it; Whistler turned it into an art gallery, and brought the critics as to a public show. The man had agreed to pay five hundred guineas for the decorating; in consideration of the unforeseen amount of work, he raised the price to a thousand. But Whistler insisted upon two thousand, and flew into a furious rage with the man, and carried the row into the newspapers, and painted most odious caricatures of the man and exhibited them publicly.

Whistler was not content to be a great painter; he was also a lecturer, man of letters, and historian. His

idea was that when he overcame one of his enemies by a witty retort he made history, and when he collected these retorts and the stories of his quarrels into a book, he wrote history. The collecting was suggested to him by a journalist, who proposed the title, and was authorized to gather the various items from newspaper files. After the work was done and the book prepared and printed, Whistler decided to take the credit for himself, so he sent the journalist a check for ten pounds and dismissed him. Naturally the poor fellow insisted that he had rights in the matter, and tried to bring out the book in Belgium and in Paris. Whistler pursued him and had him arrested and heavily fined; he took over the man's idea and title, and so we have the beautiful volume with the fancy butterflies. Whistler's conduct throughout the affair was brutal, and his book I am inclined to call the most hateful thing in print. Its content is the egotism of a highly intelligent and persistent hornet.

Whistler has, to be sure, some ideas to advocate. He reprints a lecture called "Ten O'clock," named from the after-dinner hour at which it was given in London. To his well-fed audience he explained that art is for artists, who alone can understand it; art has nothing to do with the people, who only degrade it when they touch it. Moreover, art has no concern with morality, whether individual or national; "in no way do our virtues minister to its worth, in no way do our vices impede its triumph."

As for painting, Whistler declared it to be a matter of the arrangement of line, form and color; it has nothing to do with any other idea, not even with the subject being painted. To quote the painter's own words: "The subject matter has nothing to do with the harmony of color." In order to emphasize this point of view Whistler took to calling his portraits by such names as "Harmony in Green and Rose," "Caprice in Blue and Silver," "Symphony in White," "Variations in Violet and Green," "Arrangement in Black and Gray." One of his most famous paintings showed fireworks at night, and was called "Nocturne in Black and Gold." John Ruskin wrote of it: "I never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face." So there was a picturesque and sensational libel suit, and the jury awarded Whistler damages of one farthing, that is, half

a cent. That was not enough to pay his lawyer's fees, and so the painter went into bankruptcy and spent a few years in Europe.

What is the meaning of this art doctrine so defiantly enunciated? The answer is, it is an extension of the artist's egotism; the snobbery of his profession and his caste, in every way and from every point of view an anti-social and predatory thing. Here we are in London, the heart and brain of the British Empire, at that time the greatest agency of exploitation in the world. Here is wealth and fashion, representing the wrung-out sweat and blood, not merely of enslaved British workers, but of enslaved hundreds of millions of black and brown and yellow races. Here dwell the masters, and they wish to flaunt their splendor; heedless of the groans and the agony, the clamor of all the misery of mankind, they command a dining-room painted over with gold and blue peacocks, or hung with portraits of their splendid predatory selves and their lovely parasitic females.

And here come the swarms of painters competing for their attention, seeking to flatter their vanity and awe their ignorance. One hornet a little more venomous than the rest is able to impress his hornetry upon them, to stir their greed by the possibility that his paintings may some day be sold for thousands of pounds. So they decide to have themselves "done" by this strange genius. They come to his studio and spend months of torment standing or sitting for him, while he fusses and frets, and paints and wipes out and paints again, taking infinite pains to see that the ladies' dresses are made of exactly the right quality of muslin, cut and stitched in exactly the right way—because there is one certain precise kind of muslin dress which is art, and any other kind is something else.

All this is called "beauty"; all this has laws, so Whistler tells us, as definite and determinable as the laws of physics or chemistry. Beauty is a thing permanent and immortal, and independent of all other qualities —morality, justice, health, truth, honesty. The answer is: all this is poisonous nonsense, handed out to the rich by those who exploit their vanity. Art without morality is simply art produced for patrons who have no morality by artists who have no morality. As to the permanence of such art, the answer is that its standards are at every

moment subject to the attack of more clever devisers of new forms of folly and pretense. The proper way to cut a muslin dress today is an absurd way to cut it tomorrow; and the same applies to harmonies of color and outlines of form. The Turks cherish fatness in women, because they like to be comfortable in their harems; the early Christians thought that emaciation was beautiful, because it prepared them for heaven; Whistler, wishing to flatter the aristocratic conceit of his patrons, paints them abnormally tall and lean, because that is the snobbish notion in fashion at the moment.

Whistler was a great artist in the technical sense; that is, he learned to put paint on canvas in such a way as to convey an impression of reality, not merely physical but emotional and spiritual. He was a terrific worker, as any man must be to succeed in the fierce competition of modern life. He took his art with seriousness; and it happened that twice in his lifetime something lifted him above the empty theories in which he gloried. The first time was when he painted his mother. Here was a gentle, sensitive, sweet-faced, devout Presbyterian old lady, with whom all his childhood memories were bound up; he painted her sitting with her hands in her lap, and her gray hair brushed down and covered with an old-fashioned lace cap. He called it "Arrangement in Black and Gray"; and that is all right, because black and gray are old lady's colors. But he would have described the painting even better if he had given it a moral title: "Arrangement in Reverence and Affection."

And then came Carlyle; poor, bewildered, dyspeptic, struggling old prophet from Scotland, he looked at Whistler's portrait of his mother and loved it, and consented to let the painter do the same thing for him. So here is another study, posed in the same way, and called "Arrangement in Black and Gray," instead of "Arrangement in Pity and Pathos." These two pictures have human feeling and moral meaning; therefore they are the two which have been reproduced, and which everybody knows and loves. That is the answer to Whistler's art theories; but of course it is an answer which he himself would have scorned—he would have made a witticism on it, and got out a new edition of "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies."

"This victory is not yours," says Mrs. Ogi. "It is Death's."

## CHAPTER XCVII

### THE DUEL OF WIT

Some years ago a story was told me concerning a certain eminent man in England. This man came from the common people; he possesses one of the finest minds in England, and he is the champion of all things generous and free in letters and life. The lady who told me the story, herself a well-known novelist, was writing about the particular section of society from which this man sprung, and in which he had lived his boyhood; she needed an item of local color, and asked him how such people pronounce a certain word. The man flushed, and demanded: "How should I know?" I thought this story one of the most awful I had ever heard; and the lady novelist was shocked when she saw how I took it, for she had not meant to tell anything so serious about her friend. She tried to explain to me, it wasn't really so bad as it seemed; the pressure of caste feeling is so strong in England that a man is irresistibly driven to cover up his humiliating past.

I tell the incident as preliminary to a discussion of George Meredith. Here was a devoted servant of the muses, a master of his craft, who won a quite unique position among his contemporaries. The public knew him not; to the end of his life his books had little sale, and he was compelled to support himself by odd jobs of journalism and publisher's reading. But to the inner circle of letters his name became a kind of secret password; he was the choice and precious one, the poet's poet and the novelist's novelist, and the little country nook where he dwelt was a shrine to which the distinguished pilgrims traveled from England and America and the Continent.

But over this great writer's life there hung a dark shadow; a tragic secret, hidden from the world, dimly guessed only by a few of the inner circle. What had been the master's early life? He never spoke of it. Where had he spent his childhood? No one knew. Where had

he been born? The government was collecting some kind of census, and put the question to its great novelist, and he lied; he invented an imaginary birthplace. So he lived safe from scandal, and only after his death was the dreadful truth revealed. His grandfather had been a tailor to naval officers! His father likewise had been a tailor, and failing in business, had gone to South Africa and become a tailor there. His son had nothing to do with him and never spoke of him.

What there is so especially dreadful about a tailor you will have to ask some Englishman to explain to you. I personally have known tailors who were exceedingly kind and generous men; I have known tailors who were students and thinkers and devoted workers in the Socialist movement. All that a tailor may be; I suppose he may even be a saint. There is only one thing which he can never by any possibility be, and that is an English gentleman.

And George Meredith aspired to be an English gentleman; he wrote about English gentlemen in all the infinite subtleties of their relationship to other English gentlemen, and more especially to English ladies. He wished to be, not an interloper and observer, tolerated because of his cleverness with the pen; he wished to be an authentic member of the caste, so secure that he might exercise that most cherished of all the privileges of the caste—to ridicule other members who fall away from the perfect caste ideal.

Do you think that I am making too much of this frailty of George Meredith? I answer that it is the key to the understanding of everything he wrote. Stop and think what it means that a man who possessed one of the great intellects of his time, who had all the wisdom of all the ages at his command, should be so bowed down with awe before the spirit of caste that he was willing to lie about himself. I do not mean merely that such a man's whole life would become a pose; that he would pretend to be abnormally spiritual and ascetic, when as a matter of fact he was strongly attracted to lark-pies; that he would study his features, and observing that he had a refined and sensitive profile, would place himself at the window in such a position that his adorers would gaze upon this profile during the course of their visit. What I mean is

that this man would have a caste-ridden mind; the subtleties of caste distinction, the minute details of appearance and conduct and thought by which caste superiority is manifested and maintained—this is the stuff out of which the man's novels would be made, and the theme upon which his superfine intellect would be concentrated.

And so it is in the Meredithian universe. The dark, grim, vaguely shadowed Nemesis of the Greeks is gone; Jehovah with his thunders has been laid away with the other rubbish in the garret; what is left, to dominate the lives of men and women, to blast their hopes and lure them to ruin and despair, is social convention. And all such convention may be boiled down into one formula: thou shalt not break into a caste higher than that to which you were born. You may have money, and try it; you may pretend to have money, and try it; but in both cases alike you will fail. Meredith gives us masterpieces in the way of impostors trying to break in; he is even willing, under the veil of art, to use his own tragic life-story, and in "Evan Harrington" he tells about a tailor's son who tries to break in. He turned such blasts of ridicule upon the poor tailor family and the poor tailor state of being, that Meredith's tailor father down in South Africa was shriveled up with shame, and could not thereafter endure to hear his son's novels discussed.

Likewise, women fail to break into the sacred caste. They have beauty, they have wit, but nothing avails. The creator of "Diana of the Crossways" lays himself out to convince us that this heroine is the most brilliant conversationalist that ever graced a London dinner-table. But she had to have money, and so she sells a government secret to a great newspaper, and being discovered, is thrown out. And if Diana failed, with all her worldly gifts, what hope for poor Lucy Feverel, who had nothing but country graces, natural loveliness of body, and sweetness and kindness and unselfishness of spirit? The "ordeal" of Richard Feverel lies in the fact that being a son of a rigid English gentleman, rigidly trained according to an ideal system, he falls in love with a country flower, and instead of seducing her according to the custom of the caste, he marries her. So, of course, the pair of them are trampled.

The defenders of Meredith will say that he does not

desire such a state of affairs; he merely portrays it, because it exists. My answer to that is the familiar one, that art is propaganda. If George Meredith had believed in overthrowing the caste system in England he could surely have found ways to convey that fact to us. He might have begun with his own life; he might have taken his stand on a pedestal and said: "I, who know myself to be a highly intellectual novelist, am the son and grandson of tailors, and be pleased to make what you can of that." If Meredith had realized vitally and vividly the anti-social nature of the caste system, and especially how that system is the very negation and death of art—surely he would have found space in his many novels for at least one character who has a little success in the effort to hold his head up against the power of snobbery. Remember, this was a time in which Alfred Harmsworth, gutter-journalist, became an earl, and Keir Hardie, pit-boy, became a labor hero. But Meredith's caste-bound characters fail, and fail without any hint that they might have succeeded.

I do not wish to be unjust to this brilliant novelist, who was a modern man in many ways. He was entirely free from that religiosity which blighted Tennyson's mind. He was clear-sighted about love, seeing that it is a thing of flesh and spirit, and must be both, or neither. Also he stood valiantly for the rights of ladies to be educated, and to have their talents recognized, and to dispose of their own personalities. In his old age he advanced the proposition that all marriages should be for a term of years, and that at the end of the term the parties should be free to remarry or not, as they wished. That this most sensible idea did not raise more of a storm was because most persons in Britain took it for granted that the novelist must be joking.

But as a rule what we get from Meredith is not social criticism in its broad sense, but merely caste criticism, the self-discipline of the privileged orders. Meredith's greatest novel is "The Egoist," a quite amazing study of one of these superior males, a creature who has been brought up from infancy to regard his sublime self as the purpose for which his own family exists, and one of a small group of select persons for whom the British Empire, and therefore the world exist. Meredith lays him bare for us

in every turn and movement of his being, and we loathe him heartily, and sympathize with the series of females with whom he dallies in courtship.

Meredith is one of those super-sophisticated novelists who are unwilling to allow us to be interested in a course of events. The intellect in him has eaten up and sterilized the emotions. In reading him we are tormented by a feeling that his story and his characters would be delightful if only he would give them a chance; but he has such a brilliant style, he has so many ideas to convey to us, and so much shining wit and corruscating metaphor to display. It is like an exhibit of fireworks, which can be most ravishing for a few minutes; you catch your breath, and think you have never seen anything more lovely. But after an hour or so you decide that fireworks lack variety.

This infinitely subtle and delicate, witty and charming personality invites us to sit with him as gods upon Olympus, to look down upon the tragic fate of mortals, and find pleasure in the irony of their failures. As in the case of Corneille, we are concerned with the strife and clash of aristocratic egotisms; we take part in deadly intrigues, and in duels without mercy. But times have changed, and now no blood is shed, no corpses cover the ground; it is a duel of wit, with a death-blow in a phrase or the lifting of an eye-brow. Watching the conflict, we find ourselves asking, precisely as we asked with Corneille: What have we to do with these puppets? How do they concern us? What reality is there, what permanence to the conventions which dominate their puppet minds? What real wisdom is there behind their volleys of cleverness? So we realize that we are still in the Victorian age; and Victoria and boredom are two words for one thing.

## CHAPTER XCVIII

### THE CULTURED-CLASS HISTORIAN

We are getting down to modern times, and have come to the first great artist of whom I can say that with my own eyes I saw him. Shortly before the war, coming out of the dining-room of the New Reform Club in London,

my host, H. G. Wells, stopped me and whispered: "There sits the Great Cham." He may have said "Great Buddha" or "Great Jupiter"; anyhow, I looked, and seated at a table in solitary state was a large elderly gentleman, with large bald head shining whitely, and jaws moving meditatively. I knew him from his pictures; and besides, there was at that time only one Great Cham, or Great Buddha, or Great Jupiter of international letters.

I did not ask to meet him, because, having read him, I understood the aesthetic proprieties, and did not wish to surprise a Great Master with his mouth full of lunch. Also, the days of my discipleship had long since passed, and I was not sure if I would be able to think of just the proper delicate subtlety with which to convey my attitude to one whom I had once revered, and now regarded with affection because of reverence remembered. That sentence is a little longer and more subtle than I usually write—such being the effect upon one's style of merely thinking about Henry James.

In my youth I wanted to know the great world, and who could tell me with such compelling authority? I read everything he had written up to that time—no small task, some forty volumes, many of them fat. I stuck to it day and night for a couple of months, and then wrote an essay, "The Leisure-Class Historian," which, alas, no editor could be found to publish, and which was consumed, with all the rest of my belongings except one night-shirt, in the Helicon Hall fire.

Coming back to the task at this interval, I realize that I gave Henry James too broad a title; he is "the cultured-class historian." He knows of the existence of the uncultivated mob of idle rich, the "high-feeding, champagne-quaffing, orchid-arranging," as he describes them; but his theme is that small section of the rich who possess aesthetic sensibilities, and withdraw in haughty aloofness from high-feeding, champagne-quaffing, and orchid-arranging, and live fastidious lives devoted to the cultivation of beauty. The word "beauty" Henry James understands in the broadest sense; it covers not merely the things you look at, but the things you do and the things you think. You recognize it by its being elegant, dignified and restrained.

To an outsider it might appear cold, but the Master

admits you to the inside, and you discover that it is passionate, quivering with feeling. But it sternly checks its impulses, and seldom permits itself to do anything except to think about the problems confronting it, to analyze these problems in minute detail, to pile up subtlety and complication concerning them—literally whole mountains of complication; or perhaps (since, when you are reading or writing or discussing Henry James, you anticipate many variations of metaphor, and endless subtle shadings of metaphor, and parenthetical disquisitions interpreting and qualifying, and still further, as it were, intensifying metaphor—each separate complication, you will note, set apart from other complications by a comma) it would convey a more accurate impression of the authentic Jamesian manner, if I were to say that he builds towering structures of subtle sophistication, which structures you, with joy and excitement of the mind, see rising, unexpectedly splendid, before you, revealing new possibilities of penetration into the refinements of sensibility, as well as new possibilities of sentence structure, which convey, by infinite variation of shadings, a sense, or, as it were, almost a sensation, of the actuality of exceptional mental experience.

Such are the great rambling sentences, through which you stagger and gasp your way. You keep on, because you find that the old boy is really saying something. He is not delighting in intricacy and smartness for their own sake, as you so often feel to your annoyance with Meredith; he is not deliberately confusing you with useless obscure detail like Browning; he is really making a heroic effort to convey some complicated intricacy in the mental processes of people who not merely think, but who think about thinking, and think about thinking about thinking.

Henry James was born in New York in 1843, his father being a theological writer. His elder brother, William, became a popular professor of psychology at Harvard, thus giving rise to the jest that "William is a psychologist who writes like a novelist, and Henry is a novelist who writes like a psychologist." Henry was taken abroad and educated in England, France and Switzerland, which had the effect of cutting his roots from under him. At the age of twenty-six he moved permanently to Eng-

land, and from that time made his home there, with occasional trips to the Continent.

He was a sensitive youth, quiet and shy; he suffered from spinal trouble, and liked to sit quietly in drawing-rooms and listen to other people talk. Then he would go apart for long periods, and reflect upon what he had heard, and weave it into stories. He was grateful to his friends if they would tell him their troubles, because that provided him with copy; but he never told anyone his own troubles, and his friends lost sight of the possibility that anything might ever have happened to him personally. Edmund Gosse, who became his intimate, tells how in his old age James, walking up and down in a garden one evening, was suddenly moved to open his heart. Looking up at a light in the house, he was reminded of a scene long, long ago, when he had stood in a street one rainy night, looking up thus to a lighted window, expecting to see a face, but the face had not come. That was all of the story; but Mr. Gosse was thrilled, even appalled. Actually, once upon a time, something had happened to the Master!

It would perhaps not be indelicate of us to feel wraranted in assuming that this something had to do with the relation of the sexes. We note that this relation is, like everything else in the Henry James world, fastidious, reserved, and governed by the aesthetic sensibilities. These people do not love, they talk about loving; and as years pass, and the later manner grows, their talk comes more and more to deal with the condition of having been loved.

In "Daisy Miller," an early story which made the young author famous, we see an innocent American girl in Rome, who to her horror receives an improper advance from a young Italian. In "Madame de Mauves" we see an American lady, unhappily married to a Frenchman in Paris, tempted by passion for a true young American. But when we come to the great long novels with the great long sentences of the "third manner," we find ourselves dealing with the fact that once upon a time, long, long ago, a man and a woman committed an impropriety, and now somebody else is slowly finding out about it, to the general horror and dismay. Thus "The Golden Bowl," seven hundred and eighty-nine closely printed pages,

dealing with the mental and emotional reactions of a woman who has an intimate woman friend, and discovers that her husband has at some past period been the lover of this friend. Or "What Maisie Knew," in which we discover an ancient intrigue through the eyes of the little daughter of the intriguing woman. Perhaps you think you know what obscenity is, but you get a new revelation of its possibilities when you proceed through the mind of a child to pick up hints and allusions of the elders, and piece them into a pattern of fornication.

Henry James, the son of an American theological writer, acquired, like Hawthorne, an inside knowledge of Puritanism, and in his early novels he took the New England point of view toward intrigues and improprieties. Thus Daisy Miller is innocent and free, and the dark, wicked Italian misunderstands her freedom, and thinks she is what a girl with such manners would be in Europe. Madame de Mauves, a loyal wife, is married to a Frenchman of no morals, and when she loves a true and good American, she scorns to sin, for the reason that she would be imitating the Frenchman, she would be doing what the Frenchman expects her to do. "The American" is a novel about a "man from home," who has made money, and seeks a cultured wife among the French nobility, and gradually finds that he is in a nest of murders. All regulation hundred percent patriotic stuff!

But Europe grew upon Henry James, and America faded, and the aesthetic sensibilities became less Puritanical and more cosmopolitan. So we have "The Ambassadors," the world's great international novel. Something over twenty years ago I went with a friend on a canoeing trip in the far Northern wilds, and for six weeks we saw only one white man, the keeper of a Hudson Bay trading post. Baggage had to be limited on such a trip, and I took only one book. Evening after evening I would read it, a few pages at a time, lying in a tent by candle light. So I had plenty of time to note every subtlety, and before I got through I was talking Henry James in my sleep. Now the twenty years are as a day, and the characters and their story are as vivid as ever in my mind.

A young New Englander, son of a wealthy family, has come to Paris and settled there, refusing to go home. His family send an elderly friend as ambassador to bring

back the prodigal. This ambassador, whose name is Strether, discovers that a crude young barbarian has been changed by his Parisian life into a cultured and self-possessed man of the world. Strether is duly impressed by the change, and attributes it to the influence of a middle-aged French lady, who has been the young man's good angel.

He writes about the situation, but the family is not satisfied, and another ambassador comes, this time the young man's elder sister, the incarnation of the acidulous propriety of New England. This sister is not in the least impressed by the French lady, but on the contrary suspects the very worst between the lady and her brother. Strether is shocked by her crude ideas; but then comes the climax of the drama—a scene wherein it is accidentally revealed to Strether that the acidulous sister is right; a part of the process whereby the charming French lady has civilized the young barbarian has been to take him as her lover. So two civilizations meet, and in the clash between them we see the hearts of both revealed.

You note that in all these stories we are dealing with well-to-do people. No other kind of people exist in the world of Henry James. Such highly complicated and subtle aesthetic sensibilities are only possible in connection with large sums of money, freely furnished to the characters without effort on their part. It is impossible to imagine any person in the "third manner" being so vulgar as to make, or even to take money. What they do is to spend money elegantly, and when they meet persons who spend it inelegantly, they turn away in dignified disdain. There are only a few passages in which the novelist condescends to be aware of the existence of the lower orders, who by their toil produce the wealth which makes the aesthetic sensibilities possible. We get one such glimpse in "The Princess Casamassima"; the hero glances at the women and girls of the working classes, and then:

> "What remedy but another deluge, what alchemy but annihilation?" he asked himself as he went his way; and he wondered what fate there could be, in the great scheme of things, for a planet overgrown with such vermin, what redemption but to be hurled against a ball of consuming fire.

This cultured-class hero fails to ask himself what

would happen to his cultured self if the working-class vermin were to be wiped out. Manifestly, these vermin have to be allowed to go on working, in order that elegant illuminati from America and England and Italy and France may gather in the great capitals to listen to beautiful music and attend the newest art exhibitions and discuss the newest books. It is necessary that hundreds of millions of peasants should drudge on the rack-rented soil of Europe, it is necessary that mill slaves in New England and sweat-shop slaves in New York and mine slaves in Pennsylvania should wear out their bodies, in order that culture ambassadors may acquire old world subtlety and understanding; may watch the "European scene" and, by reporting it for us, enable us, at least in imagination, to escape the crudity and provinciality of our home lives.

Henry James wrote a biography of Hawthorne, who as a fellow sufferer under Puritanism he greatly admired; and in the course of that biography he drew a picture of the "American scene," which enables us to understand why a cultured-class novelist fled from it at the age of twenty-six, and came back for only one visit in a long lifetime. Read the list of our deficiencies—and do not read it hurriedly, but stop and, as Henry James would say, "savour" each phrase, realizing the mass of content it has to the aesthetically sensitive mind:

> No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, no manors, nor old country-houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages, nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, no abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public schools—no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class—no Epsom nor Ascot!

## CHAPTER XCIX

### THE PREMIER NOVELIST

We have studied two great novelists of the later Victorian age who failed of wide popularity. We shall not understand that age completely unless we study one who was crowned, not merely by the critics, but by the mass of novel-reading ladies.

Mrs. Humphry Ward was her name, and she takes

me back to the days when I was a poor devil of a would-be writer, half starving in a New York lodging-house. What made success in the world of books? I had to know, or die; and the New York "Times" was kind enough to publish a weekly review to give me the information. Every year or two there would appear a new novel by Mrs. Humphry Ward; and always this novel would be the occasion for a grand state review, signed by the name of some eminent pundit, occupying pages one and two, with a large portrait on page one. So I knew that Mrs. Humphry Ward was modern literature, and read each novel as part of my life training.

I read it with a mingling of interest and fear; interest, because it told me about a set of people whom I knew did actually exist, and did actually govern the world in which I lived; and fear, because this set of people, so obviously both predaceous and stupid, were so powerfully buttressed by the prestige of snobbery, and protected by the holy mantle of religion. No novelist every worshipped Mammon-respectability more piously or portrayed it with more patient devotion than Mrs. Humphry Ward in her later years.

She was brought up in the inner circle of culture; her father was an Oxford big-wig, and Matthew Arnold was her "Uncle Matt." Everything that education could do for a young girl was done for her, and she was writing a history of Spain at the age of twenty. Incidentally, she was dreaming a wonderful dream—that some day she might be presented at court.

Her first novel, "Robert Elsmere," dealt with the subject of religion. A large section of the idling classes of England get their incomes by believing that Jesus was born of a virgin and that Jonah swallowed a whale; and with the progress of science they were naturally finding this more and more difficult. A school of ingenious Bible-twisters arose, to invent symbolical and literary meanings for fairy-tales, in order that people who no longer believed could continue with good conscience to collect the salaries of belief. Mrs. Ward made her hero one of these new-style clergymen, and somebody persuaded Gladstone to read the novel, and he wrote a long refutation of it, which caused a tremendous fuss. Statesmen in England, as a rule, read only Thucydides and Homer, while in the

United States they read only the "Saturday Evening Post." There were a great many people who never saw a modern novel, who hastened to read it when Gladstone called it dangerous. Half a million copies were sold in our country, and Mrs. Ward's fortune was made.

She had begun, you see, as a radical; and in her next novel, "The History of David Grieve," she glorifies a young hero who devotes himself to social reform. But in a very few years success and wealth and the applause of the great changed the hue of this lady novelist's reflections. She wrote "Marcella," a complete recantation of her unorthodoxy, and a picture of what had gone on in her mind. Leaders of labor and social reformers now turn out to be dangerous demagogs; and a beautiful heroine, who loves one, discovers the error of her way, and comes back to safety as the wife of a nobleman's son. From which time on Mrs. Humphry Ward was safe for aristocracy.

She moved to a mansion in Grosvenor Place, where she had a view of the garden of Buckingham Palace. She became an intimate of duchesses, and a great figure in society and politics. Her publisher would negotiate with America before breakfast, and get her seven thousand pounds advance on a new novel; so the good lady spent the rest of her life grinding out a series of glorified pot-boilers in support of the Tory principles of government. Each novel was an Anglo-Saxon world event, and the counters of book-stores in the fashionable shopping districts of America were piled to the ceiling with the new volume. Mrs. Ward's following was the Anglomaniac mob, people who have but one idea in life, to imitate the British governing classes; the sort of people who study those page advertisements and speculate anxiously: "What is Wrong with this Picture?"

Says Mrs. Ogi: "I was in that mob. In our town in Mississippi there was no book-store, but an adventurous Jew who kept a cigar-store had the idea of getting a shelf of modern novels and renting them for ten cents a volume. I was the first young lady in the town who had the courage to go into a cigar-store, and I set all the other young ladies to reading Mrs. Humphry Ward."

"What did you get out of it?"

"I never could find out. It was all about British polit-

ical life; people were pulling and hauling and intriguing, but I never could understand what their principles were, or what they expected to do when they got elected."

"That's the point exactly; there are no principles, there are only parties. Whichever one gets in constitutes the 'government,' and its task is to hold labor by the throat while capital picks its pockets. Labor produces a sovereign a day, and capital takes it, and gives labor four shillings wages, and labor tips its cap and is grateful. And then capital's favorite lady-novelist comes round with a market basket containing sixpence worth of food and medicine; which is called charity, and is the means of getting labor's vote at election time."

Such was the private life of Mrs. Humphry Ward. She was what is called "philanthropic"; that is, she was prominent in those society activities which help the poor by playing upon the vanity and love of display of the rich. Her life consisted in rushing about from one meeting to another, shaking hands and chatting, rushing home to dress and dine with prominent people, and then reading about it in the next day's newspapers. She was so busy with all this that she could only find half an hour a day in which to read Greek!

The characters in her books are busy with the same kind of activities. The leading man is a handsome young aristocrat, whose occupation is becoming premier. We never have any idea why he wants to be premier, except that as hero that is his function. The idea that the people of England should ask reasons for making an empty-headed noodle into their premier is one that never occurs to anyone in the novels. What interests us is the efforts of the young man's friends to push him in, and the efforts of his enemies to bar him out.

Success or failure in all such "political novels" depends on one factor, an entanglement of sex. It appears that the English voters insist rigidly upon one requirement—that the statesman who holds them by the throat while their pockets are being picked shall be ostensibly chaste. The law may be summed up by saying that he is permitted to have only one leisure-class female during his life. Of course, if she dies, he is permitted one more leisure-class female; but for the rest, he is required to satisfy his needs with females of lower classes. Political novels derive

their plots from the fact that occasionally some statesman fails to conform to this law; there is a statesman who wants two ladies, or there are two ladies who want the statesman. Nature has not created man exclusively for the purpose of wearing a top-hat and a frock-coat, and making speeches in Parliament; nor do all women find complete satisfaction, like Mrs. Humphry Ward, in political labors to keep other women from getting the vote. There are women with mischief in them, who endeavor to tempt statesmen from exclusive devotion to "careers." And the statesmen are tempted; they commit indiscretions, such as taking walks in the moonlight with the evil females; and a thrill runs through all "society," and the tongues of the gossips wag furiously. Did they? Or did they not? The friends of the statesman rally to save him; and the enemies of the statesman sharpen their tomahawks; and Anglomaniacs, watching the scene, are thrilled as when Blondin on the tight-rope sets out to walk across Niagara Falls.

"We don't really need to worry," says Mrs. Ogi; "a hero is always a hero, and in all the books that I got from the little cigar-store in the Mississippi town, I cannot recall that one hero ever failed to become premier."

"It would be interesting," says Ogi, "to compile statistics on the question: How many premiers have there been in the novels of Mrs. Humphry Ward, and how many in the recent history of the British Empire?"

## CHAPTER C

### THE UNCROWNED KING

We come now to study America in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The dominating factor in this period was the Civil War, a conflict in which the physical and moral energy of the country was exhausted. There followed the inevitable reaction: Abraham Lincoln was succeeded by the carpet-bagger in the South and the tariff-boodler in the North. The very hero who had led the nation to victory, and had said, "Let us have peace," entered the White House to turn the government over to corruptionists. In the two generations following the Civil War America made enor-

mous material and some intellectual progress, but no moral progress discernible. As I write this book, our political morals are embodied in a post-campaign jest: "The Republicans should have stolen the Washington monument, and then Coolidge would have carried Florida and South Carolina."

Provincial America in the decades following the Civil War based its religion upon the dogma that it was the most perfect nation upon God's footstool. The whisky-drinking, tobacco-chewing, obscenity-narrating, Grand Old Party-voting mob would tolerate no criticism, not even that kind implied by living differently. To it an artist was a freak, whom it punished with mockery and practical jokes. There were only two possible ways for him to survive; one was to flee to New York and be lost in the crowd; the other was to turn into a clown and join in laughing at himself, and at everything he knew to be serious and beautiful in life. This latter course was adopted by a man of truly great talent, who might have become one of the world's satiric masters if he had not been overpowered by the spirit of America. His tragic story has been told in a remarkable study, "The Ordeal of Mark Twain," by Van Wyck Brooks.

For something like forty years Mark Twain lived as an uncrowned American king; his friends referred to him thus—"the King." His was a life which seemed to have come out of the Arabian Nights' enchantment. His slightest move was good for columns in the newspapers; when he traveled about the world he was his country's ambassador at large—his baggage traveled free under consular dispensation, and in London and Vienna the very traffic regulations were suspended. When he went to Washington to plead for copyright laws, the two houses adjourned to hear him, and the speaker of the House turned over his private office to the king of letters. He made three hundred thousand dollars out of a single book, he made a fortune out of anything he chose to write. The greatest millionaires of the country were his intimate friends; he had a happy family, a strong constitution, inexhaustible energy—what more could a human being ask?

And yet Mark Twain was not happy. He grew less and less happy as time passed. Bitterness and despair began to creep into his writings; sentences like this: "Pity

is for the living, envy is for the dead." Stranger yet, it began to be whispered that America's uncrowned king was a radical! In times of stress some of us would go to him for help, for a word of sympathy or backing, and always this strange thing was noticed; he was full of understanding, and would agree with everything we said; yes, he was one of us. But when we asked for a public action, a declaration, he was not there.

"The Jungle" was published, and he wrote me a letter. It was burned in the Helicon Hall fire, and I recall only one statement: he had had to put the book down in the middle, because he could not endure the anguish it caused him. Naturally, I had my thoughts about such a remark. What right has a man to refuse to endure the anguish of knowing what other human beings are suffering? If these sufferings cannot be helped, why then perhaps we may flee from them; but think what the uncrowned king of America could have done, in the way of backing a young author who had aimed at the public's heart and by accident had hit it in the stomach!

Then came the Gorki case. The great Russian writer came to America to plead for freedom for his country, and to raise money for the cause. The intriguers of the tsar set out to ruin him, and turned the bloodhounds of the capitalist press upon him. A dinner in Gorki's honor had been planned, and Mark Twain and William Dean Howells were among the sponsors. The storm of scandal broke, and these two great ones of American letters turned tail and fled to cover.

A year or two later Mark Twain was visiting Bermuda, and came to see me. He had taken to wearing a conspicuous white costume, and with his snow-white hair and mustache he was a picturesque figure. He chatted about past times, as old men like to do. I saw that he was kind, warm-hearted, and also full of rebellion against capitalist greed and knavery; but he was an old man, and a sick man, and I did not try to probe the mystery of his life. The worm which was gnawing at his heart was not revealed, until in the course of time his letters were given to the public. Now we know the amazing story—that Mark Twain lived a double life; he, the uncrowned king of America, was the most repressed personality, the most

completely cowed, shamed, and tormented great man in the history of letters.

He was born in a Missouri River town in 1835. His father was a futile dreamer with a perpetual motion machine. His mother was a victim of patent medicines, who had seen better days, and reared a family of ragged brats in a foul and shabby environment, where a boy saw four separate murders with his own eyes. "Little Sam" was a shy, sensitive child, his mother's darling, and she raised him in a fierce determination to have him grow up respectable and rich. He became a printer, then a pilot on the Mississippi River. This latter was a great career; the river pilot was the uncrowned king of this western country. He saw all the world in glorious fashion; he was a real artist, and at the same time carried a solemn responsibility.

The Civil War destroyed this career, and Mark Twain went out to Nevada to become a gold miner, promising his mother that he would never return until he had made a fortune. He failed as a miner, and was forced to live by journalism. So he drifted into becoming the world's buffoon. He always despised it—so much so that he put a pistol to his head. But he lacked the courage to pull the trigger, and had to go on and be a writer. His "Jumping Frog" story went around the world; after which he came East, and wrote "Innocents Abroad," and made his three hundred thousand dollars.

Shortly after that he exchanged the domination of his mother for that of a wife. He fell in love with the daughter of a wealthy coal-dealer in Elmira, New York. There was a terrible "to do" about it in respectable "up-State" circles, for Samuel Clemens was a wild and woolly westerner, who didn't know how to handle a knife and fork, while the daughter of the coal-dealer had been brought up on an income of forty thousand dollars a year. However, this strange lover was a "lion," so they decided to accept him and teach him parlor tricks. They gave the young couple a carriage and coachman, and a house which had cost twenty-five thousand dollars; it wasn't long before he was completely justifying their faith, by living at the rate of a hundred thousand a year.

The wife was a frail woman, a semi-invalid, and Mark Twain adored her; also, he was awe-stricken before her,

because of her extremely high social position. She was ignorant, provincial, rigidly fixed in a narrow church-going respectability; by these standards she brought him up, and raised a couple of daughters to help him. As Clemens phrased it, his wife "edited" him; as his daughters phrased it, they "dusted papa off."

What these women did to America's greatest humorist makes one of the most amazing stories in the history of culture. They went over everything he wrote and revised it according to the standards of the Elmira bourgeoisie. They suppressed the greater part of his most vital ideas, and kept him from finishing his most important works. When he wrote something commonplace and conventional they fell on his neck with delight, and helped to spend the fortune which it brought in. When he told the truth about America, or voiced his own conclusions about life, they forced him to burn it, or hide it in the bottom of a trunk. His one masterpiece, "Huckleberry Finn," he wrote secretly at odd moments, taking many years at the task, and finally publishing it with anxiety. Mrs. Clemens came home from church one day, horrified by a rumor that her husband had put some swear words into a story; she made him produce the manuscript, in which poor Huck, telling how he can't live in the respectable world, exclaims: "They comb me all to hell." Now when you read "Huckleberry Finn," you read: "They comb me all to thunder!"

Mark Twain had in him the making of one of the world's great satirists. He might have made over American civilization, by laughing it out of its shams and pretensions. But he was not permitted to express himself as an artist; he must emulate his father-in-law, the Elmira coal-dealer. The unhappy wretch turned his attention to business ventures, and started a huge publishing business, to publish his own and other books. He sold three hundred thousand copies of General Grant's Memoirs, and sold hundreds of thousands of copies of other books, utterly worthless from the literary point of view.

He was always at the mercy of inventors with some new scheme to make millions. For example, there was a typesetting machine; he sunk a huge fortune into that, and would spend his time figuring what he was going to make—so many millions that it almost made a billion. He

was a wretched business man, and failed ignominously and went into bankruptcy, losing his wife's money as well as his own. H. H. Rogers, master pirate of Standard Oil, came forward and took charge of his affairs, incidentally playing billiards with him until four o'clock every morning. And then some young radical brought him an exposure of the Standard Oil Company, expecting him to publish this book as a public service!

Going back to Mark Twain's books, we can read these facts between the lines, and see that he put his balked and cheated self, or some aspect of this self, into his characters. We understand how he poured his soul into Huck Finn; this poor henpecked genius, dressed up and made to go through the paces of a literary lion, yearns back to the days when he was a ragged urchin and was happy; Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer represent all that daring, that escape from the bourgeois world, which Sam Clemens dreamed but never achieved. He put another side of himself into Colonel Sellers, who imagined fortunes; and yet another side into Pudd'nhead Wilson, the village atheist who mocked at the shams of religion. Secretly Mark Twain himself loathed Christianity, and wrote a letter of cordial praise to Robert Ingersoll; but publicly he went to church every Sunday, escorting his saintly wife, according to the customs of Elmira!

The more you read this story the more appalling you find it. This uncrowned king of America built up literally a double personality; he took to writing two sets of letters, one containing what he really wanted to say, and the other what his official public self was obliged to say. He accumulated a volume of "unmailed letters," one of the weirdest phenomena in literary history. He was indignant at the ending of the Russian-Japanese war, because he believed that if it had continued for a couple of months more the tsar would have been overthrown. When Colonel George Harvey invited him to dine with the Russian emissaries to the Portsmouth Conference, he wrote a blistering telegram, in which he declared himself inferior as a humorist to those statesmen who had "turned the tragedy of a tremendous war into a gay and blithesome comedy." But he did not send that telegram; he sent another, full of such enraptured praise of the Russian diplomats that Count Witte sent it to the tsar!

That is only one sample out of many. He wrote a War Prayer, a grim satire upon the Christian custom of praying for victory. "I have told the whole truth in that," he said to a friend; and then added the lamentable conclusion: "Only dead men can tell the truth in this world. It can be published after I am dead." He explained the reason—this financier who had fortunes to blow in upon mechanical inventions: "I have a family to support, and I can't afford this kind of dissipation." And again: "The silent, colossal National Lie that is the support and confederate of all the tyrannies and shams and inequalities and unfairnesses that afflict the peoples—that is the one to throw bricks and sermons at. But let us be judicious and let somebody else begin."

Of course a man who wrote like this despised himself. It was the tragedy of Tolstoi, but in a far more humiliating form; Tolstoi at least wrote what he pleased, and did in the end break with his family. But Mark Twain stayed in the chains of love and respectability—his bitterness boiling and steaming in him like a volcano, and breaking out here and there with glare and sulphurous fumes. "The damned and mangy human race," was one of his phrases; and again he wrote: "My idea of our civilization is that it is a shabby poor thing and full of cruelties, vanities, arrogances, meannesses and hypocrisies. As for the word, I hate the sound of it, for it conveys a lie; and as for the thing itself, I wish it was in hell, where it belongs."

In the effort to excuse himself, this repressed personality evolved a philosophy of fatalism. Man was merely a machine, and could not help doing what he did. This was put into a book, "What is Man?" But then he dared not publish the book! "Am I honest?" he wrote, to a friend. "I give you my word of honor (privately) I am not. For seven years I have suppressed a book, which my conscience tells me I ought to publish. I hold it my duty to publish it. There are other difficult tasks I am equal to, but I am not equal to that one." He did publish the book at last, but anonymously, and with a preface explaining that he dared not sign his name.

He, America's greatest humorist, had a duty laid upon him; he saw that duty clearly—how clearly we learn from a story, "The Mysterious Stranger," a ferocious satire

upon the human race, published after his death. In this book Satan asks: "Will a day come when the race will detect the funniness of these juvenilities and laugh at them —and by laughing at them destroy them? For your race, in its poverty, has unquestionably one really effective weapon—laughter. Power, money, persuasion, supplication, persecution—these can lift at a colossal humbug—push it a little—weaken it a little, century by century; but only laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. . . . As a race, do you ever use it at all? No; you lack sense and the courage." Such was the spiritual tragedy going on in the soul of a man who was going about New York, clad in a fancy white costume, smiled upon and applauded by all beholders, crowned by all critics, wined and dined by Standard Oil millionaires, dancing inexhaustibly until three or four o'clock in the morning, and nicknamed in higher social circles "the belle of New York."

Mrs. Ogi from Mississippi reads this onslaught upon Mrs. Ogi from Elmira; and her husband wonders a little while he waits. But she only smiles, and remarks: "In our family the men have a traditional saying: 'It's all right to be henpecked, but be sure you get the right hen!'"

## CHAPTER CI

### SMILING AMERICA

We come now to an American artist who played the part of his own wife; that is to say, Ogi and Mrs. Ogi combined in one person.

His name was William Dean Howells, and he was born in 1837 in an Ohio town. He began life as a typesetter in a newspaper office, then he became a reporter, and was made United States consul in Venice at the age of twenty-four. It was a job which left time for art, and young Howells trained himself diligently. He became editor of the "Atlantic Monthly," the first non-Bostonian to hold that high ecclesiastical office. For years he presided at the dying bedside of New England literature, and after the patient was buried he came to New York and found a permanent berth with "Harper's Magazine." He wrote for sixty years, and published over a hundred volumes of poetry, criticism and fiction. He had ease and grace and

charm, all the drawing-room literary virtues; he displayed the same virtues in real life, and so everybody loved him, and he became, according to Mark Twain, "the critical Court of Last Resort in this country, from whose decisions there is no appeal."

The principle upon which the success of Howells was based is revealed to us in his autobiography. He tells how as a young reporter on an Ohio newspaper, he was sent to a police court, and he quit. "If all my work could have been the reporting of sermons, with intervals of sketching the graduating ceremonies of young ladies' seminaries"—why, then he might have become a city editor! He tells of coming upon a sordid tragedy, and resolving that forever after he would avert his eyes from the darker side of life; "the more smiling aspects of life are the more American." You can see why he needed no Mrs. Ogi from Elmira, or from any other place, to edit his manuscripts.

To dignify this program of portraying the more smiling and therefore more American aspects of life, Howells gave it the name of "realism." All his life long he published critical articles in defense of this program, and he described these articles as "a polemic, a battle." Also he wrote novels, which he regarded as pure, undiluted works of art. It never occurred to the dear soul that the novels were merely a continuation of his "polemic," another phase of his "battle." Not content with rebuking men who did wrong, Howells wished to provide examples of what was right; therefore he invented characters and contrived situations to exhibit the virtues and charms of that middle-class gentility which was always smiling and therefore always American.

The apologia of this school of "realism" may be formulated as follows: I am a gentleman of placid disposition and quiet feelings, with no devastating passions tormenting me, no cosmic idealisms driving my soul. I am comfortable in the bourgeois world, having always earned a good salary and taken care of my family. I believe this is the proper thing for men to do, and if they fail to do it it is their own fault. I love to read good books, and I cultivate a mild and gentle imagination. I write about my sort of people, and I call such books art. If men persist in having violent and stormy passions and intense and

overwhelming convictions; if they persist in going to extremes, whether base and cruel, or heroic and sublime—then I am disturbed in my literary dignity, and I denounce such writing, and call it romanticism, propaganda, and pose. And since I am "the critical Court of Last Resort in this country, from whose decisions there is no appeal," it follows that young writers who persist in displeasing me are sentenced to move into garrets and be starved and frozen into submission.

Upon the above formula Howells founded and maintained a school of "local color" in the United States. Men and women who had been brought up in different parts of the country wrote stories describing in detail the peculiarities of speech and costume and manners there prevailing. Confining themselves to the everyday and obvious events of humdrum life, and being content to observe and not to think, they were sure of a cordial reception from Howells, and of publication and payment by the great magazine and publishing house which took the great critic's advice. By enforcing these standards for half a century, Howells and a group of editors like him put a blight upon American literature from which it is only now escaping.

I do not want to be unfair to a gracious and kindly gentleman. In his later years he fell under the spell of Tolstoi, and took to calling himself a Socialist. He wrote a story, "The Traveler from Altruria," a gentle and winning satire upon the stupidities of capitalism. I would love him more ardently for having written that book if he had been willing to fight for it; if he had put any trace of social protest into his magazine editing and contributing. But he joined with Mark Twain in deserting poor Gorki, and he continued to hold his comfortable position and to collect his salary and royalties from Harper and Brothers, after that concern went into bankruptcy and was turned into the propaganda department of J. P. Morgan and Company.

I have told in "The Brass Check" the curious story of my own experience with this publishing house; I will repeat it here, so far as it bears on Howells. Ten years ago I was collecting material for my anthology of revolutionary literature, "The Cry for Justice," and I applied to one or two hundred authors for permission to quote briefly from their writings. Having got the authors' per-

mission, I then applied to the publishers; whereupon I received from Messrs. Harper and Brothers a letter, forbidding me to quote from any book published by them, even with the author's permission. I took the trouble to call upon the gentleman who had this matter in charge, and was informed that the firm considered my reputation to be so bad that I would do injury to any author whom I quoted. I had with me a letter from Howells, saying that he would be very glad to be quoted. But no matter; I was not to quote him; neither was I to quote Mark Twain, nor Charles Rann Kennedy, nor H. G. Wells!

It happened that Howells' editorial office was in that same dingy old Franklin Square building, so I took the matter to him. He was courteous and friendly—but he did not feel that it would be proper for him to oppose the objections of his publishers. My plea, that he owed something to a fellow-Socialist, and still more to the movement, did not avail.

And lest the reader think that I am unduly prejudiced against the publication department of J. P. Morgan & Company, let me quote a couple of sentences from a letter written to the editor of "Harper's" Magazine by Lafcadio Hearn: "Your firm is a hundred years behind; ignorant, brutal, mean, absurdly ignorant—incredibly ignorant of what art is, what literature is, what good taste is. But it makes money like pork packeries and butcheries and loan offices."

History has its curious ironies, and this would be one—if it should turn out that Howells, in refusing to be quoted in "The Cry for Justice," had lost his best chance of being read in the future. And lest this remark be taken for megalomania, let me add that I am not the author of the anthology, merely its editor, and others could have done the job as well, perhaps better. The point is that this is the kind of literature which the future will read. The whirlwinds of social revolution are gathering to sweep the world; and when they have passed, there will be a new generation of clear-eyed young workers, who will look upon the fiction-characters of William Dean Howells with puzzled dismay. Characters so mild and gentle, so tolerant in the presence of intolerable wrong! Characters so very respectable in the getting and spending of their incomes, so anxious in their conformity to pecuniary con-

ventions! The young workers will not be able to imagine themselves in the place of such characters; but will study them as one studies relics in a museum, or queer-shaped insects under a microscope.

## CHAPTER CII

### THE EMINENT TANKARD-MAN

Through the latter part of the nineteenth century there existed in the United States a peculiar literary phenomenon, the underground reputation of Ambrose Bierce. The fiction reading public did not know this man; the readers of "yellow" journalism knew him as a Hearst writer, even more brilliant and cynical than the average. But now and then you would come upon an expert in the literary craft, who would tell you that Ambrose Bierce was a short-story writer and satirist without equal in America, the greatest genius our literature had produced. You would set out to look for these obscure writings, and could not find them in the libraries or the book-stores. At last you might get someone to lend you a copy, and then you would join the campaign of whispering.

Now Bierce is coming into his own. The public is hearing about him. He is of especial interest to us here, because he spent his energy in attacking, with the utmost possible fury, the thesis of this book; while at the same time, both in his life and his writings, he vindicated that thesis to the last syllable.

Ambrose Bierce was born in 1842, the son of a poor farmer in Ohio. At the age of nineteen he enlisted and fought through the Civil war, being twice wounded and brevetted major. Then he became a journalist, first in San Francisco, then in London, finally in Washington and New York.

He was one of the most ethical men that ever lived, a born preacher, as vehement and persistent as Carlyle. He fought for his beliefs, and shrank from no sacrifice in their behalf. He was no man's man, but said what he thought, no matter how bitter and fierce it might be. He paid the penalty in a host of enemies and a lifetime of struggle.

That such a man should have taken up with art-for-

art's-sake theories is assuredly a quaint incongruity in the history of literature. But so it happened. He looked out upon America, and saw the grafters thriving, he saw corruption enthroned as a political system, and he gave up the human race in despair: "a world of fools and rogues, blind with superstition, tormented with envy, consumed with vanity, selfish, false, cruel, cursed with illusions—frothing mad." These phrases occur in an article, "To Train a Writer"; and you can see what sort of writer it would train! A writer who renounces solidarity, and seeks refuge in his own talent, the one place where a man is master, where he can make beauty, order and dignity. So let us live in the world of art, let us consecrate ourselves to its service, and waste no love upon "the irreclaimable mass of brutality that we know as 'mankind.'"

This conviction Bierce holds in the fashion of a religious zealot. He has reached the stage of knowing that the rest of the world doubts his faith; therefore he asserts it the more vehemently, and flies into a rage with all who question it. His letters have been published; and in the first one, addressed to a young girl who aspires to write, he storms at the viciousness of those who would use the writer's craft in the service of human progress. "Such ends are a prostitution of art." And later on in the letters this champion of the art-for-art's-sake theory reveals the terror that gnaws at his soul. "If poets saw things as they are they would write no more poetry."

Some twenty years ago Jack London sent me the first book of a San Francisco poet, and in an inscription he described the author: "I have a friend, the dearest in this world." The book was "The Testimony of the Suns," by George Sterling; and friendship being an unlimited thing, I also took over a share of it. For twenty years I have been puzzled at finding in this gracious companion and maker of exquisite verses certain qualities of bitterness and aching despair. When I read these letters of Ambrose Bierce I discovered a plausible explanation; for here is the young poet, submitting his first efforts; and here is the savage misanthropist using his power as a preacher and an elder, in an effort to set the poet's feet in the paths of futility and waste.

Ambrose Bierce, among his host of antagonisms, had one which amounted to an insanity—his dislike of Social-

ists; and he saw both London and Sterling lending their influence to the hellish cult. Bierce was one of those subtle opponents who say that they have a certain amount of sympathy with the Socialist ideal, were it not for the fact that the partisans of the cause make themselves so objectionable. Yes; they would truly be willing to see mankind delivered from poverty, crime, prostitution and war, were it not for creatures of the lunatic fringe, who wear their hair long and tie their neck-ties into a bow!

There is something pathological about the ravings of Bierce on this subject, and we are not surprised to learn that in his early days a prominent Socialist writer, Laurence Gronlund, took a girl away from him, and thus excited his animosity. We find him quarreling with one person after another who persists in dallying with Socialist ideas, and in the end he quarreled even with Sterling, and wrote him letters of harsh abuse, which Sterling out of kindness to his memory destroyed.

The published letters are full of literary criticism; it is always consistent—and in every case exactly the opposite of what you find in this book. Ibsen and Shaw are "very small men—pets of the drawing-room and gods of the hour." Tolstoi is "not an artist," and Burns is "gibberish"; Gorki is "not only a peasant, but an anarchist and an advocate of assassination." Bierce was living in Washington, serving the Hearst newspapers, when Gorki came to America. Bierce had never met him, and really knew nothing about him, but he swallowed with greedy eagerness the propaganda emanating from the Russian embassy in Washington; he writes to Sterling mysterious hints from inside information: "It isn't merely the woman matter. You'd understand if you were on this side of the country."

All this has become familiar to us with the passage of the years; it is the thing known as hundred percent American boobery. The capitalist system sets up its colossal slander-mills, with a staff of secret agents, forgers and safe-crackers and confidence men, a devil's crew. The people of course have no conception of this machinery for the manipulating of their minds; and how pitiful to find a haughty intellectual as credulous as the poorest clod-hopper! It is one more demonstration of the fact that a

modern man who does not understand revolutionary economics is a child wandering in a forest at midnight.

There were other factors in the making of Bierce's irascibility. He describes himself as "an eminent tankard-man," and he found in San Francisco plenty of people willing to practice art for art's sake, not troubling themselves or him with hopes for the human race. There is a tale of a riotous crew, resolving to put an end to Christianity by pulling down a cross which stood upon the highway. They tied themselves to the cross with ropes and pulled their hardest, only to sink down exhausted in drunken slumber. I wonder that some Catholic poet does not take this for a piece of symbolism. Maybe it has been done—I admit there are gaps in my knowledge of Catholic poetry!

What had this man to give the world, if anything? The answer is: love of truth, and loathing of corruption and hypocrisy. He wrote all those things which Mark Twain knew, but suppressed. He was the only one of those who fought through the war to tell the truth about it. And therein lies his power and significance as an artist; he, the art-for-art's-saker pure and simple, writes tales which make us hate mass-murder.

The formula of these tales is the one with which Maupassant has made us familiar. Men aspire, and fate knocks them down and tramples their faces into the mud. When we see in the chances of battle a son shoot his own father, we may draw the conclusion that all human life is futile, as Bierce wishes us to; or we may elect to draw a different conclusion, and join the League to Outlaw War.

Bierce's verses were shafts of satire aimed at the social kites and buzzards of his time. They have a quality of personal ferocity seldom equalled in the world's literature. There are two volumes of them, "Black Beetles in Amber" and "Shapes of Clay." Readers of "The Brass Check" may remember a sample there quoted, dealing with Mike de Young, publisher of the San Francisco "Chronicle," and concluding:

> A dream of broken necks and swollen tongues—
> A whole world's gibbets loaded with de Youngs!

Here, as in so much of Bierce's work, his ignorance of social forces rendered him impotent. He writes about in-

dividual scoundrels, but he does not understand what makes them, nor how to remedy them; so his writing is useless to himself, to his victims, and to us.

Once upon a time Ambrose Bierce went to sleep at night on a flat stone in a graveyard. We are not told whether his exploits as "an eminent tankard-man" had anything to do with this, but we are told that as a result he became a lifelong sufferer from rheumatism and asthma. So his old age was bitter, and he found insufficient consolation in producing literary masterpieces for a hypothetical posterity. He wandered off into Mexico and disappeared. "To be a gringo in Mexico at the present time is a cheap form of euthanasia," he told his friends. So apparently it proved; and so this book has another vindication, provided by a leading opponent.

"Be careful," says Mrs. Ogi; "the Mexican bandits may not have got him after all."

"He has already had a few whacks at me. George Sterling sent him an article of mine, published twenty years ago, 'Our Bourgeois Literature,' and he ridiculed my thesis that the qualities of American literature are explained by American social conditions: 'The political and economical situation has about as much to do with it as the direction of our rivers and the prevailing color of our hair.' Also he read 'The Journal of Arthur Stirling,' and called my poor poet 'the most disagreeable character in fiction.'

Says Mrs. Ogi: "He did not even trouble to get the poor poet's name right!"

Her husband answers: "The officers in the British army have a saying: 'What is fame? To die in battle and have your name misspelled in the "Gazette".'"

## CHAPTER CIII

### THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

Having considered a fiction writer whom the great public rejected, let us now consider one whom it enthusiastically acclaimed.

Richard Harding Davis was born in Philadelphia in 1864. His father was a famous editor, and he was raised among cultured people, with every advantage of prestige

and social position. He was handsome, full of energy, and all his life made hosts of friends. After getting through college, he took a job with Arthur Brisbane on the New York "Evening Sun," where his brother tells us he underwent "considerable privation," his salary being only thirty dollars a week at the start, plus his earnings from short stories. During this same period the present writer was living in New York upon four and one-half a week, and never sure of having that; so you see that standards of "considerable privation" vary considerably.

Davis's first stories dealt with a hero named Van Bibber, a scion of the Fifth Avenue plutocracy, handsome, debonair, wearing his clothes with irreproachable taste, and devoting his abundant leisure to the reforming of New York; Haroun-al-Raschid brought down to date, Sir Galahad in a dress-suit. Happy, care-free, he wanders, with innocent heart and open purse, making things right wherever he finds them wrong. He has the entrée behind the scenes of theatres, but not to seduce the chorus girls—ah, nothing like that, but to rescue a sweet, innocent child and carry her home to a cold, proud, cruel Fifth Avenue father who has refused to acknowledge his wild oat. That done, Van Bibber roams again, and jumps on the neck of a burglar, and kicks his pistol out of his hand, and then gets sorry for him, and buys him a ticket to Montana, where his wife and daughter wait for him to come and reform. Then he wanders to the Bowery, and sees a rowdy insulting a lady; it is not enough for him to demonstrate the natural superiority of the plutocracy by putting this one rowdy to flight, he must crown the demonstration by accepting a challenge from three of "the purest specimens of the tough of the East Side waterfront," and routing them in the presence of the proud aristocratic beauty. The charm of the story lies in the truly elegant insouciance with which young Van Bibber does all these things—the manner of a juggler keeping six billiard-balls in the air.

Here, you see, is the perfect type of the ruling-class glorifier: Homer and the Arabian Nights, Don Quixote and King Arthur, Dumas, Ouida, Rudyard Kipling and Mrs. Humphry Ward all rolled into one. No wonder our grandfathers were captivated, or that the innocent souls who edited "Harper's" and "Scribner's" extended the free-

dom of their columns to this inspired creator of plutocratic romance! It is interesting to note that our "Dick" came from the most English place in the United States, and looked like an Englishman and, perhaps as a matter of instinct, dressed and talked like an Englishman. In his early writing days he lived for a few months at Oxford, and the students of Balliol College took him in on equal footing, an honor never before accorded to a non-student American.

The English ruling class had taken upon itself the task of colonizing and exploiting the rest of the world, and the American ruling class was following suit, and Richard Harding Davis became the prophet of both. Throughout Central America and the West Indies the process is invariable: American capitalists bribe the governments of these countries and get enormously valuable concessions, then they send in engineers and other handsome young heroes clad in khaki and puttees and with automatics in their belts. These heroes engage the natives of the country to exploit the natural resources and ship out the wealth of the country, to be spent upon monkey dinners at Newport and champagne suppers in Broadway lobster palaces. Sooner or later the natives become irritated at the sight of their natural resources being exported for such purposes, so they revolt against the native government which has sold them to the Yankees. Then the handsome young Yankee heroes draw their automatics and bring up machine guns, and gloriously defend the native government which they have bought and paid for. The ending comes triumphantly with a Yankee gunboat in the harbor, and some marines charging up the slope of a hill waving Old Glory, while the audience leaps from its seats and cheers for five minutes.

"Soldiers of Fortune" was "Dick" Davis's' biggest success. It brought him reservoirs of money, first as a serial, then as a novel, then as a drama, and finally as a movie. His other novels were like it, in that they dealt with members of the ruling class gloriously making or marrying fortunes. The next was called "The Princess Aline," and told about a young, wealthy, handsome and aristocratic artist—so many elements of good fortune!—who falls in love with the photograph of a German princess. The model for this exquisite heroine was the future

Empress of Russia; but Davis did not live to write a sequel, showing the final destiny of his heroine, her mangled body dumped into a well along with her husband and four exquisite daughters. Recalling these novels at the present hour, I see the international plutocracy with all its exquisite wives and daughters, crouched trembling upon the top of a mountain of gold and jewels, while all around them the handsome young hired heroes peer out over the sights of machine guns at the massed fury of the exploited millions of mankind—white, black, yellow, brown, red, and mixed.

Davis became a war correspondent and spent his time racing over the earth from one scene of excitement to another. I have run through the volume of his letters and jotted down a few date lines in the order they occur: Cuba, London, Egypt, Gibraltar, Paris, Central America, South America, Moscow, Budapest, Havana, London, Florence, Greece, Havana, Cape Town, Pretoria, Aix-les-Bains, Massachusetts, Madrid, London, San Francisco, Tokio, Manchuria, Havana, the Congo, New York, London, Santiago, Vera Cruz, Belgium, Plattsburg, Paris, Athens, Rome. If you know the history of the world for twenty-five years beginning with 1890 you can connect each of these geographical names with a coronation, a jubilee, a war, or other ruling-class recreation.

All through the letters runs the theme of money, the Aladdin's tale of a soldier of literary fortune. He gets five thousand dollars for the serial rights of "Soldiers of Fortune" from "Scribner's Magazine"; he gets five hundred dollars for reporting a foot-ball game; he gets three thousand dollars and expenses for a month's reporting of the Cuban struggle with Spain, and when America enters the conflict, he gets ten cents a word from "Scribner's Magazine" and four hundred dollars a week and expenses from the New York "Times."

Everywhere he goes he is, of course, a lion, and moves only in the highest circles. His letters are full of diplomats and generals and lords and ladies and kings and queens, together with the most famous actors and literary lights. He is presented at Court—and by this, needless to say, I mean the Court of their Majesties the King and Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, and Emperor and Empress of India. And all through the letters we note

dinner-parties and banquets and champagne-suppers and cocktails—interrupted by a siege with sciatica, preparing us for the quick curtain, when our ruling-class hero departs his successful life at the age of fifty-two.

New York is a place of mean and envious gossip, and one of its diversions was telling anecdotes illustrating the snobbery and self-importance of Richard Harding Davis. It appears that in the days of his extraordinary prosperity he did not always recognize his former newspaper cronies when he met them on the street. Perhaps he had noted that so many of these former cronies took the occasion to borrow money from him. Anyhow, I have one anecdote to contribute to the collection.

It was early in 1914, a period of great depression in my own life and fortunes. Davis, of course, never had any depressions; he had just come back from Cuba, where he had turned "Soldiers of Fortune" into a moving picture film, and it was now being launched on Broadway with enormous éclat. I happened to know the manager, and was invited to the opening performance, where in the lobby I was introduced to the great author and lion of the occasion. When he heard my name his face lighted up, and he gave me a warm hand-clasp, exclaiming, "Ah, now! You write books because you really have something to say, while I write only to make money!" It was so different from what I expected that I was completely taken aback, and could only make a deprecating murmur. "It is true," he said; "I know it, and so do you."

The reader may say that in telling this story I do more credit to Davis than to myself. But that is not my concern. What I have to do here is to report the statement of America's leading soldier of literary fortune concerning his own work and its reason for being.

## CHAPTER CIV

### THE BOWERY BOY

We come now to another one of those unhappy tales of young rebellious geniuses who cannot or will not fit themselves into the bourgeois world. This time it is Stephen Crane, who was the fourteenth child of a Methodist preacher and an evangelist mother, and was born in

Newark, New Jersey; which goes to prove that a genius may spring up anywhere in the world.

There is an old saying that a preacher's son always turns out to be a rake. I don't suppose that statistically this statement could be justified, but psychologically we should expect such cases; for other children get religion once a week, but the children of clergymen get it all the time. The tragedy of poor "Stevie" Crane reveals to us the folly of attaching fundamental moral principles to incredible fairy tales. When the child grows up and finds that he no longer believes the tales, he is apt to conclude that the moral principles are equally false and superfluous.

Little "Stevie" was a frail and sensitive child. His father died when he was young, and then his evangelist mother died, and he was left to grope his way alone. We find him turning up at a military academy with a reputation as a baseball player, also with six pipes—which was six too many for a lad who was to die from tuberculosis at the age of twenty-nine. He picked up a living doing odd newspaper jobs, and then he went to Syracuse University. Most singular prank of history, that James Roscoe Day, D.D., Sc.D., LL.D., D.C.L., L.H.D., Chancellor of the University of Heaven (see "The Goose-Step"), should have had in charge the intellectual and moral training of the author of "Maggie: A Girl of the Street"!

This boy had pathetic courage, and absolutely original opinions, even from the beginning. His young verdict was that Tennyson was "swill" and Oscar Wilde "a mildewed chump." That, of course, was merely calling names; but in addition he had the oddest and most charming gift of humor. Of his mother he said, "You could argue as well with a wave."

Having got through with college at the age of twenty, he went to New York to live in a garret and starve for the sake of his independence. He chose the Bowery for his school of art; these being the old days of the wicked street, before the respectable, hard-working Jews took possession; the days when all New York gloried in its "toughness," and when now and again in the filthy old alleys they raked out a human corpse from a pile of ill-smelling rubbish. Here the boy wrote his first novel, "Maggie," dealing with a girl whose drunken parents beat her and drove her on to the streets. It was an entirely

new note in American literature, because it told the truth about these things quite simply and as a matter of course, without apology or sentimentality.

The young author took it to Richard Watson Gilder, editor of the "Century Magazine," and went back, hungry and shivering with cold, to get the verdict. The "Century" was one of the four great magazines which determined the destiny of American authors; its policy was guided by the fact that it had "half the expectant mothers in America" on its subscription list. Gilder said that he could not publish "Maggie"; and after he had made long-winded explanations, Stephen boiled them down to one sentence, as was his custom. "You mean that the story is too honest?" And Gilder was honest enough to answer that he did.

Reading about this garret existence sends shivers over my skin; because it was only ten years later that I was to live the same life, and have the same experiences in the same editorial offices. I also took manuscripts to Gilder and was turned down. The same publisher who accepted "The Red Badge of Courage," and made a fortune out of it, accepted also "The Journal of Arthur Stirling," and tricked me into signing a contract out of which I never got a cent.

All his life Stephen Crane had heard the war stories of old soldiers—not what you read in the official history books, but the real things that men had felt and done. He decided upon this theme, and read up his "local color," and in ten quivering nights he produced "The Red Badge of Courage." At last he had a success; a newspaper syndicate paid him a hundred dollars for the serial rights! He waited a year or two longer, and then it came out in book form. It sold fairly well, until suddenly the English critics went wild over it, and then New York knew that it had a man of genius.

The realists had been ruling the literary roost, insisting that you must portray life by describing its external details. But this boy had a new idea; the interesting thing to him was the way people felt, and details merely served to reveal the human spirit. He was not afraid to describe emotions as having colors. So here was a new kind of fiction, called "impressionism"; and the realists were laid on the shelf for a while.

"Stevie" made a small fortune, and no longer drank his drinks in the saloons of the Bowery, but in the high-priced cafés on Broadway. He wrote short stories and sketches, and verses without rhyme or rhythm, which puzzled the critics—I remember that in my student days they were the joke of the newspaper paragraphers. The gossips got busy with him, of course, and a legend was built up concerning the extent of his revolt against social conventions. His biographer, Thomas Beer, defends him vigorously against these tales. It seems clear that he did not take drugs; while, as to his drinking, we can only repeat what we said about the pipes—any drinking at all was too much for a man who was to die of tuberculosis in a few years.

As to the women stories, they seem to have been partly blackmail, and partly the young writer's imprudent notions of chivalry. He was talking with a girl of the streets in a saloon, and a policeman arrested the girl, and Crane came into court to testify in her behalf, and so of course got himself in for a lot of disagreeable publicity. It would have been so easy for him to avoid that, by having the ordinary caution of a man of the world. If only he had been willing to learn from Mark Twain and William Dean Howells how to dodge the shadow of a scandal!

The life of this wayward child of genius is one more illustration of that disagreeable alternative which life so often presents us. You may have self-restraint, plus more or less hypocrisy, and live long and successfuly; or you may have do-as-you-please, plus absolute honesty, and undermine your constitution and die at the age of twenty-nine. The mind of Stephen Crane was like an acid which dissolved the shams and pretenses of civilization. But he has nothing to put in the place of these things. In "The Red Badge of Courage" he shows us a hero blind with fear; and the theme of all his short stories and later novels is that life is a matter of accident, and the universe a thing without moral sense or meaning. This belief Crane put also into his conduct; he knew nothing to do with his life, except that he had a childish wish to see a real war with his own eyes. First he tried to get to Cuba, and was shipwrecked; and while he got a good story out of that, "The Open Boat," he paid with a part of his very small store of vitality. Then he went to Greece, but the cook-

ing made him ill. Finally he saw our war in Cuba, and displayed such indifference to his own fate that the tongues of the gossips wagged faster than ever. He must be seeking death, because of some dark scandal hanging over his head!

He was altogether out of step with the 1890's; but now a new generation has come, and all our young intellectuals are cold and objective and cynical, agreeing that pity is a mistake and life nothing in particular. They leave to me the unpleasant task of holding uninvited post-mortems over the ardent unhappy dead.

Let me put it briefly: that some day there will be yet another generation, which will realize that no man can get along without a religion, least of all the creative artist. It will not be the Methodist religion, but it will be something that gives young geniuses a reason for taking care of themselves and their gifts.

There was one religion which Stephen Crane adopted for a period of two weeks. He was a Socialist for that long—so he explains in a letter; but he met two other Socialists, who told him his doctrines were wrong, and then fell to quarreling as to which of the two was right. I say: Oh, young Stephen Cranes of the future, judge truth by the tests of truth, and not by our personal frailties and follies!

## CHAPTER CV

### THE CALIFORNIA OCTOPUS

The mind of America at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century was controlled by elderly maiden aunts and hired men of privilege; and it seemed that behind the scenes of our national life some evil jinx was operating to keep us in this double thrall. There arose five independent and original-minded artists, and here is what happened to them: Stephen Crane died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-nine, Frank Norris died of appendicitis at the age of thirty-two, David Graham Phillips was killed by a lunatic at the age of forty-four, O. Henry died of alcoholism at the age of forty-eight, and Jack London killed himself at the age of forty.

Frank Norris was born in California in 1870, the son

of well-to-do parents. All through his childhood and boyhood he liked to tell stories and make sketches; he wasn't sure which he liked to do best. He studied art in Paris for a couple of years, and published a long narrative poem at the age of twenty. Then he came home and tried to learn something about writing at the University of California, but without success. He took a graduate course at Harvard, and here he wrote "McTeague," his first successful novel.

He had been absorbing Zola, and set out to apply the Zola method to America. He is going to give you the brutal reality of life, he is going to write about big animal men with heavy muscles and prominent jaws, and broad-bosomed women with large quantities of alluring hair. He is going to give you the great open spaces, and also the sordidness and smells of cities—as much as America can be got to stand. The theme of "McTeague" is avarice, and we see a dentist's office with a big gold tooth for a sign, and all through the tragic story we run upon the motif of gold in everything from sunsets to decorations.

Then came "The Octopus," and here we are in outdoor California, dealing with crude people and nature on a large scale. "The Octopus" has two themes. It is the Epic of the Wheat, and we see the great unfenced plains upon which wheat is raised wholesale, and the golden flood of grain on its way to feed the millions in the cities, a torrent of food so vast and heavy that it symbolically suffocates a man on its way. And then there is the railroad, the Octopus which has seized the wheat country and is devouring the settlers. I read this novel before I read anything of Zola's, and so I got the shock of a great discovery. I was one of many youngsters who were set on fire. Here was power, here was a new grasp of reality; this was the way to write novels!

Also I was horrified and bewildered: could it be that things like this happened in America? Could it be that railroads set themselves up as the ruling power in a community, that they defeated the laws, deprived people of their homes and drove them into exile or outlawry? You see, I was the naive and innocent product of American public schools and of Mr. J. P. Morgan's university; I really thought that I lived in a democracy, and under the protection of a Constitution. At that very time I was

raising campaign funds and helping to elect the president of our university—mine and Mr. Morgan's—as a "reform" mayor of New York City!

I tried to find out about this railroad Octopus, and there was no way to find out. It was a dark secret of American life, crushed completely underground. There was no literature about it, nothing in the newspapers or the magazines, no books or pamphlets in the library of the great university. Now, twenty-three years later, I can tell you of a book in which you may read the life-story of one of these men of the San Joaquin, who were driven to outlawry by the Southern Pacific Railroad. The name of the man is Ed Morrell, and Jack London made him the hero of a novel, "The Star Rover." They caught him finally and put him in prison, and that is the story he tells in his book, "The Twenty-fifth Man," one of the most appalling narratives ever penned by a human being.

Frank Norris, who taught me something new about my country, had set out deliberately to do that very thing. He explained his ideas in a book, "The Responsibilities of the Novelist"; and I might, if I wanted to take the time, play a trick upon you, by quoting sentences from his book, mixed in with sentences from my book, and you could not tell the difference. For example, who is it that says: "No art that is not in the end understood by the People can live or ever did live a single genration"? Who says: "It is the complaint of the coward, this cry against the novel with a purpose"? Who says: "The muse is a teacher, not a trickster"? Who says: "Truth in fiction is just as real and just as important as truth anywhere else"? It is Frank Norris who says all these things.

He goes on to point out that the pulpit reaches us only on Sundays, and the newspaper is quickly forgotten, but the novel stays with us all the time. And yet, facing this responsibility, there are novelists who admit that they write for money, and "you and I and the rest of us do not consider this disreputable!" Norris goes on to voice his own attitude toward his work: "I never truckled; I never took off the hat to Fashion and held it out for pennies. By God, I told them the truth. They liked it or they didn't like it. What had that to do with me? I told them the truth."

He qualifies his doctrine by the statement that the nov-

elist must not let his purpose run away with his story. I have an idea he must have let publishers and critics persuade him he had done that in "The Octopus"; for in "The Pit," the second volume of his proposed trilogy, he is more tame and conventional. He tries to interest us in a grain broker and his wife as human beings—and he cannot do that, because parasites are not and cannot be interesting, except in satire after the fashion of "Babbitt." We miss the epic sweep and bigness of "The Octopus," and we are not consoled by the fact that "The Pit" had twice the sale.

The relationship between the novelist's purpose and his story is very simple; the two things are one, and of equal importance, and the novelist must have them both in hand at every moment of his work. The consequence of losing either is equally fatal. The novelist who loses his grip upon the story and the characters who are living the story, begins at once to write a tract or a sermon—I know all about that, having done it. But equally fatal it is to lose your grip upon your purpose; for then you are doing meaningless reporting, and becoming a camera instead of a creative intellect.

I am prepared to hear it said many times that the author of this book does not know the difference between a tract or sermon and a work of art. But those who read the book, not to get material for ridicule, but to learn the truth about art, will note that I have praised in this book only the artists who were big enough and strong enough to keep both their imaginative impulse and their intellectual control; I have failed to mention a goodly company of artists who fought valiantly for freedom and justice, but who do not belong among the greatest, for precisely the reason that their impulse to teach and to preach ran away with their inspiration. That is why you miss such names as Plato and Sir Thomas More and Ferdinand Lassalle and Bertha von Suttner and John Ruskin and Walter Besant and Charles Kingsley and Charles Reade and Robert Buchanan and John Davidson and Richard Whiteing and Francis Adams and Harriet Beecher Stowe and Edward Bellamy.

## CHAPTER CVI

### THE OLD-FASHIONED AMERICAN

David Graham Phillips affords an interesting illustration of the power of bourgeois criticism to suppress and abolish those writers who threaten its ideology. He was by all odds the greatest novelist of the period in which he wrote, a sturdy and vigorous personality, who looked at the world about him with his own eyes and really had something to say. He was worth a dozen of the imitation novelists who were acclaimed as great during the first ten years of the century. But Phillips was a "muck-rake man," a prophet and a satirist; therefore the critics patronized him, and since his death they have forgotten him. No biography has been published, and a new generation will have to make the discovery that he wrote the biggest piece of American fiction of his time.

Phillips was eleven years older than myself, but we arrived upon the literary scene together, and I used to meet him now and then in New York. I have an idea that I annoyed him; he was generous in praising my books, but that did not satisfy me—I wanted to make a Socialist out of him, and he would not have it! He was the genuine old-fashioned American, the wearer of square-toed shoes and a string tie. I do not mean that I ever saw him in that costume, but that his view of human society was derived from that period. He came from the Middle West, and believed in the simple, small-town democracy he had there known. A man of common sense, he hated all forms of social pretense and finickyness. Like a good American, he respected money and the power of money, but he wanted the people who had this power to behave like sensible human beings, and he was infuriated because they took to putting on "side," getting English butlers and five footmen in livery.

He blamed this especially on the women. He loathed the modern parasitic female, to the extent of some twenty volumes, exposing every aspect of her foolishness and empty-headedness. She it was who dragged men to ruin, she caused the corruption of government and a general riot of greed, in order that she might have silk stockings and jewels and servants. She had spurned the jobs of

cooking and sewing and making home, without ever having taken the trouble to learn to do these efficiently. Now she couldn't do even her foolish society job; she couldn't run a rich man's household and be an intelligent companion, she couldn't bear healthy children, or raise them to be anything but shirkers.

Proper people were shocked by Phillips because he talked so plainly, and fastidious people considered him coarse. As a matter of fact, he was a man of tender heart and true refinement, who put on an aspect of rough common sense as a matter of principle. Cut out all this nonsense, he seems to say to his readers; you know we all want money, we all like comfort, we are all selfish creatures; you women especially are making silly pretenses, you know you have to be kept, and you prefer a man who is self-willed and masterful, a fighting man. So he recorded "The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig," and irritated many fine ladies. So in "Old Wives for New" he preaches the common sense idea, that if a woman is lazy and sluttish and refuses to work at her job as wife, her husband is justified in getting rid of her and marrying a young and attractive woman. In "The Hungry Heart" he deals with the eternal triangle, and shows a husband forgiving an erring wife—which you would think was good Christian doctrine, but which is contrary to fancy notions of sexual implacability. In "The Husband's Story" he portrays a wife who marries a man because she believes he will succeed; she helps him to suceed, and they rise high, but finding that the higher they get, the less interest there is in life.

Phillips was not content with preaching in his novels; he wrote a book, a general scolding at "The Age of Gilt." Here you see the old-fashioned gentleman from Indiana, an individualist, but a hater of monopoly and privilege, a modern Isaiah denouncing graft and greed. The "Cosmopolitan Magazine" lured him into writing a series of articles about the gang which was selling out our government; "The Treason of the Senate," the articles were called, and they made an enormous uproar. Theodore Roosevelt made a speech denouncing "muck-rake men," which was very plainly aimed at Phillips. Afterwards, in his character as Mr. Facing-Bothways, Roosevelt made an attempt to get information from Phillips, for use in his

fight against the Senate. Let me testify that only a few weeks before Roosevelt made this "muck-rake" speech, I sat at his dinner-table in the White House and heard him call the roll of these very same senators, naming them according to the interests they served—the senator from the Steel Trust, the senator from the Copper Trust, and so on. I recall the description of Hale of Maine, the senator from the Shipping Trust: "the most innately and essentially malevolent scoundrel that God Almighty ever put on earth!"

The entire writing life of Phillips was barely ten years, and in that period he worked incessantly, rewriting and revising with painful conscientiousness. His stories were successful as serials, and I remember once teasing him because they were always of the right length for the purpose; I wished that mine would behave in that convenient way. The jest apparently troubled him, for he referred to it on several occasions. He did not tell me that for ten years he had been working in secret upon a novel of three hundred thousand words!

He left that when he died, and it waited five years for a magazine to get up the courage to print extracts from it. We have it now in two volumes, "Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise." Its heroine is a girl who bears the brand of illegitimacy, and runs away from home to escape it; but they bring her back and marry her off to an elderly farmer, and the picture of her bridal night is one of the unforgettable scenes of American fiction. Susan is ignorant of the world, a flower in the mud. Groping for light, she escapes again, and tries to earn her living in a box factory, and undergoes all the horrors of tenement life. Starved out, she takes to the streets in Cincinnati, and we see the graft and cruelty of city government. She is taken up as the mistress of a politician and travels with him in Europe. But always she is reaching toward something better; her spirit remains untarnished, and in the end she becomes a successful actress.

This story, of course, shocked the orthodox and respectable. It was a new kind of romanticism, familiar enough to Europe, but not to us. Could a woman's soul remain pure while her body was sullied? The critics denied it; but, as it happens, several women of that sort have made their appearance since Phillips wrote—for

example, the author of "Madeleine," who had equally degrading experiences to tell, and yet kept her soul, and is working to help the downtrodden part of her sex.

Nothing offends bourgeois respectables more than the statement that women are driven to prostitution by economic forces. They like to believe that the women of the poor are naturally depraved; also, they don't want working girls made discontented with their lot, and they don't want social reformers poking their noses into box factories and department-stores. So they call "Susan Lenox" an immoral book, and it is taboo in libraries and reviews.

But as a matter of fact, David Graham Phillips shows himself in this book a thoroughly bourgeois person, safely and wholesomely "American" in his whole-hearted acceptance of the doctrine that a woman cannot and ought not try to live without comfort. Susan's experience in the box factory is brief; she suffers, both in mind and body, but not so deeply that she cannot bear to leave the working class, and rise above it, and win fame and fortune by entertaining the master class, in that kind of prostitution known as the capitalist theatre. It does not occur to her to conceive a passionate ideal of sisterhood with all the oppressed factory workers; to hang on to her job with them, and teach and organize them, and lead them in a strike for better working conditions and higher wages.

That, you see, is another method by which a heroine could develop a beautiful soul; another path by which she could break into the world of intellect and power—the way of class-consciousness and solidarity. But David Graham Phillips did not understand the revolutionary psychology, and could not have imparted it to his heroine; he was bound by the limitations of a small-town man from Indiana, a graduate of Princeton University, a city editor of capitalist newspapers. I read the scant records of his life, and find a leading critic praising him because he had "no panaceas"; meaning that the critic liked him because his thinking was as muddled as the critic's.

The old-fashioned American has preached us a tremendous and moving sermon, putting his whole heart into it; and it would be pleasant to be able to express for it the same unquestioning reverence as Mr. Robert W. Chambers, who writes the introduction to the book. But truth

requires me to point out that Phillips avoids having his heroine contract venereal disease—something which might decidedly have affected the beauty of her soul. Also, she manages to preserve her beauty, in spite of the part which getting men drunk plays in the life of a street-walker. In other words, he idealizes prostitution as a career for women, in order to give it the advantage over the box factory.

It is very significant that he fails to take us into this factory and show us the work; all we get is Susan's interviews with the boss in his office. We do not meet the other women, except the one with whom Susan starves in her tenement room. So we fail to realize that Susan's solution of her problem is not the solution for all women. There have to be boxes, as well as sex gratification, in the capitalist world; and thousands of women must hold their box-making jobs. They lose their hair and teeth, sometimes their fingers, and always their beauty; but they acquire class-consciousness; and here and there a genius among them, by incredible heroic labors, gets a bit of knowledge and becomes a leader. So, out of the whole mass-misery results organization, and that labor movement which is the germ of the new society, taking form, according to the wondrous process of nature, inside the shell of the old.

But of all this we get no hint in "Susan Lenox"; a middle-class story, written by a middle-class man about a middle-class girl who descends for a short period into the inferno of working-class life, and then magically rises out of it again. If David Graham Phillips had written the story of a working-class girl, who stayed with the working class and learned working-class lessons—why then all critics would have indicted him for the crime of having a "panacea," and "Susan Lenox" would have waited, not five years, but fifty years, for publication in a popular magazine!

## CHAPTER CVII

### BAGDAD-ON-THE-SUBWAY

The short story writer who signed the pen name O. Henry burst like a meteor upon the magazine world of New York. His first stories appeared in 1902, when he had only eight years of life before him. In that time he

became the recognized king of the craft; everybody read him, high and low, those skilled in writing as well as the plain people with whose fates he dealt. He poured out his stories at the rate of one or two every week, and if he did not get the highest prices ever heard of, it was because he cared nothing about money and did not trouble to claim his own.

He was a strange, reserved man, deeply loved by his few friends, but hard to get at, and resentful of the intrusion of lion hunters. He had the tenderness and sentimentality of the Southern gentleman, combined with a secretiveness which puzzled the denizens of his Bagdad-on-the-Subway. Only a few facts about his life were known; that he had lived on a ranch in Texas, had been a drug-store clerk, had written for papers in New Orleans, had traveled in Central America, and was a widower and had a young daughter—that was all his best friends knew. There was a gap in his life, and no one ventured to question him. But several years after his death a biography was published, and the disclosure was made that America's short story king had served three years and three months as a federal prisoner in the Ohio penitentiary. That was where he had begun his career as a story writer; that was where he had got his intimate knowledge of gentle grafters and chivalrous highwaymen; that was where he had acquired the pathos and the heart-break.

It was characteristic of America that there should have been a great fuss over this disclosure. There was the daughter, and also a new wife, and these thought that the dreadful secret so long hidden should have stayed hidden. Likewise some editors and reviewers thought it. Here was a man who was assumed to belong to the ages, and here was a story more moving and more instructive than any volume O. Henry had published; but they wanted to bury it in his grave—because, forsooth, America is the land of respectability, and the deepest tragedies of the human soul are of no consequence compared with the desire of two ladies to escape humiliation in a matter for which neither was in any way to be blamed.

It appears that O. Henry was a teller of a bank in Texas, the affairs of which were very loosely handled. Something over a thousand dollars was missing; somebody else got it, and O. Henry got the trouble. He was

on his way to stand trial, when he fell into a panic; he could not face the ordeal, and ran away to Honduras. But then, learning that his wife was dying of tuberculosis, he could not stand that either, and came home. His wife died, and he went through his trial in a daze of shame, and went to prison, to witness that infinity of horrors which America heaps upon those who have threatened its property interests.

While in Honduras "Bill" Porter—that was his real name—had made a strange acquaintance, Al Jennings, a train-bandit much wanted by Wells-Fargo detectives. The two men came back to America and fate brought them to the same penitentiary. Jennings has since reformed, and has given us the story of himself and his literary friend in a book called "Through the Shadows with O. Henry." So we are privileged to see the raw material out of which the stories were made, and to watch the maker at his work.

He had become the drug clerk of the prison, and in his spare hours he wrote incessantly, in order to forget the human anguish about him. He would take the outlaw stories of Jennings, the stories of all varieties of offenders in the prison, and transform them to his own uses. Outside was his little daughter, carefully kept in ignorance as to her father's whereabouts; he must have money to send her a Christmas present, and so he ground out manuscripts and mailed them to magazines.

And so once more, as in the case of Mark Twain, we see the spirit of bourgeois America, embodied in the personality of a woman, engaged in remodeling the soul of a genius. Here was a mass of material, palpitating with life, and ready to be shaped into one of the great tragic records of the ages. And here was a loving and tender-hearted, humorous and blundering Southern gentleman, with no grasp of social forces and no understanding of what had happened to him, engaged in sentimentalizing and feminizing that mass of material.

Take one example, the story of "Jimmy Valentine," the most popular character O. Henry created. This story was made into a play, which had enormous success both in America and England; it was stolen and dramatized several times in France and Spain; it was the source of a new stage variety, what is known as the "crook play."

The story tells about a little child who is locked by accident in a bank vault, and will be suffocated in a few hours. A famous safe-cracker learns of her plight and opens the safe, and thereby reveals himself to a detective who has been hunting him. But the detective, being a magazine detective, is kind-hearted and easily moved to tears; he foregoes the glory and reward of capturing a famous crook, and the crook retires to be good and happy ever afterwards in the company of the little child. Such is the underworld according to American magazine mythology.

And now, what was the true story of "Jimmy Valentine"? There was a great scandal in the state of Ohio; some high-class crooks, of the kind who never go to the penitentiary, had stolen millions of dollars, and locked all the papers in a vault and escaped. These papers must be had, and it was not possible to blow open the vault with dynamite, for fear of destroying them. So the governor applied to the penitentiary for a competent safe-cracking artist. A man came forward. He had been a gutter-rat, starving in childhood, like Al Jennings, who tells his story. At the age of eleven, a "ravenous little rag-picker," he had broken into a box-car and stolen ten cents worth of crackers, and had been sent to a "reformatory," and turned out a master-crook, at eighteen. A year later they had sent him to the penitentiary for life—an "habitual criminal." Now he was dying of tuberculosis, and his old mother was dying of grief, because she had not been permitted to see her son, or even to hear from him for sixteen years.

This man had a method of opening safes, which consisted of filing his finger-nails off, so that with the quivering raw flesh he could feel the dropping of the "tumblers," as he turned the dial of the lock. He was promised his liberty if he would open the vault for the great state of Ohio. He did it in ten seconds; and then the promise was broken, and he went back to die in prison. When his coffin was carted out, there was his old heart-broken mother in the slush and snow, toddling along with streaming eyes and stretched-out hands behind the cart.

That was a real story, you see; and O. Henry was in the prison when it happened, he felt the thrill of horror and fury that ran through the place when the pardon was denied. But, you see, if he had written that story, he

would not have had any Christmas gifts to send to his little daughter, nor would he have been invited to Bagdad-on-the-Subway to be crowned the short story king. So unwilling was he to face reality that he did not even use the detail about Jimmy Valentine's filing off his fingernails. No, the crook in his story has to open the safe with a special fancy set of tools!

You see, O. Henry simply could not face the pain of life; he did not know what to do about it, and so he dodged it—just like the magazine writers and the magazine public of his period. He could not even face his own disgrace; his heart was dead in that prison, even the thought of freedom was a terror, because of the awful secret he would carry. Jennings quotes him: "The prison label is worse than the brand of Cain. If the world once sees it, you are doomed. It shall not see it on me. I will not become an outcast."

Understand, he knew himself to be innocent; and yet he took the position of an ex-convict, crouching and trembling. There were other men who went to prison, for example, 'Gene Debs, who also knew himself to be innocent; he came out a warrior and a saint. But O. Henry accepted the social system as permanent, identical with destiny.

He was often compared to Maupassant, and that hurt his feelings, for he said that he had never written a filthy line in his life, and he did not wish to be compared to a filthy writer. You see here the limitations of his understanding; morality means sex, and he is revolted by Gallic brutality, and practices sentimental Southern reticence. But in a more fundamental way his point of view is identical with that of Maupassant; for to both writers class greed has taken the place of God in control of the universe. The French writer jeers and hates, while the American smiles and weeps; but each finds the point of his story in the incongruities and absurdities which this artificial economic fate inflicts upon its helpless and uncomprehending victims.

Strike through the pathos and the tragedy of O. Henry at any point, and what do you find? Everywhere and inevitably one thing, the Big Business system of America. Here is a waitress in a restaurant with white porcelain walls and glass-topped tables and a ceaseless clatter of

crockery. Yes, it is pathetic for a girl to carry loads of crockery all day, and try to keep virtuous on a starvation wage. Then close the O. Henry book, and consult Moody's Manual of Corporations, and you discover that the great chain of restaurants has been bought by Standard Oil; America's "great clamorer for dividends" has doubled the prices of the food without improving its quality, and has failed to raise wages to keep pace with the cost of living.

Or take James Turner, who presses hats all day and has to stand on his feet, which makes them sore; he finds his escape in reading Clark Russell's sea-tales, and having got a copy, he is happy even in jail. Consult a study of the sweated trades, and you note that hat pressing is a secondary and parasitic industry, incapable of being organized; therefore the poor devil has no one to protect his sore feet. A part of his equipment is a jeering scorn for those who are striving to enlighten him. "Say," he asks, "do I look like I'd climbed down one of them missing fire-escapes at Helicon Hall?" That is his way of saying that he has no vision of a better world; it is O. Henry's idea of being a sociologist. (If you have any curiosity concerning Helicon Hall and its fire-escapes, the story is in "The Brass Check.")

The obscure and exploited masses of New York, the waitresses and hat-pressers and soda-jerkers and bums and taxi drivers and policemen, O. Henry's Four Million, adopted him as their favorite writer, because he knew their lives, he loved them, and they felt that love under the cover of his laughter. And in truth it is a pleasant thing when you are in trouble to find a heart which feels with you; but it is an even more important thing to find a head which understands the causes of your trouble and can help you to escape it. The Four Million will have to look elsewhere than to O. Henry for that head.

There was an essential fact about him which his official biographer fails to mention; he was a true Southern gentleman in another respect—that he drank too much. Al Jennings records that he was half drunk when Jennings encountered him, sitting in front of the American consulate in the little town of Trujillo, Honduras. They proceeded to get all the way drunk, and to celebrate the Fourth of July by shooting up the place. And there is

much other drinking scattered through the story. In the prison O. Henry was in charge of certain supplies, and he found that contractors were robbing the prison, and he wanted to expose them; but Jennings showed him that if he did so, he would get himself thrown into the hole, and beaten to death by the prison powers who were sharing in the graft. So our poor Southern gentleman kept silence, and received large presents of wine and liquor. When he came to New York, this habit had him in its grip, and never let him go.

So here is a point about the O. Henry stories; they are alcoholic stories, and take the alcoholic attitude toward life. The friends of O. Henry, who spent their time trying to save him, will understand what all of us know who have had to do with Southern gentlemen of the old school: that a victim of alcohol can weep with pity and can mingle laughter with his tears; he can be charming and beautiful, gentle and kind; but one thing he can rarely have, and that is a firm grasp of the realities about him; another thing he can never by any possibility have, and that is an attitude of persistent and unflinching resolve. Yet these are exactly the qualities which the Four Million will have to develop before they can escape from their slavery in Bagdad-of-the-Traction-Trust.

## CHAPTER CVIII

### SUPERMANHOOD

We come now to the first of the writers of our time who was born of the working class, and carried his working-class consciousness into his literary career. He was the true king of our story tellers, the brightest star that flashed upon our skies. He brought us the greatest endowment both of genius and of brain, and the story of what America did to him is a painful one.

Jack London was born in San Francisco, in 1876, which made him two years my senior. We took to exchanging our first books, and a controversy started between us, which lasted the rest of his life; the last letter I received from him was an invitation to come up to the ranch and continue it. "You and I ought to have some 'straight from the shoulder' talk with each other. It is

coming to you, it may be coming to me. It may illuminate one or the other or both of us." I answered that I was finishing a job of writing; but that as soon as the job was done I would come and "stand the gaff." And then I read that he was dead!

It was the old question, several times stated in this book, of self-discipline versus self-indulgence; or, as Jack would have put it, asceticism versus self-expression. Which way will a man get the most out of life? Believing in his own nature and giving it rein, living intensely and fast; or distrusting his nature, all nature, stooping to mean cautions and fears, imposing a rule upon his impulses—and so cutting himself off from his joyful fellows, and exposing himself to painful sneers?

I see Jack vividly, as he was at our first meeting, when he came to New York in 1904 or 1905. At that time he was in the full glory of his newly-won fame, and we young Socialists had got up a big meeting for him at Grand Central Palace. Our hero came on a belated train from Florida, arriving when our hearts were sick with despair; he came, radiant and thrilling, in spite of an attack of tonsilitis, and strode upon the platform amid the waving of red handkerchiefs, and in a voice of calm defiance read to the city of New York his essay, "Revolution."

New York did not like it, needless to say. But I liked it so well that I was prepared to give my hero the admiration of a slave. But we spent the next day together, chatting of the things we were both absorbed in; and all that day the hero smoked cigarettes and drank—I don't remember what it was, for all these red and brown and green and golden concoctions are equally painful to me, and the sight of them deprives me of the control of my facial muscles. Jack, of course, soon noted this; he was the red-blood, and I was the mollycoddle, and he must have his fun with me, in the mood of the oyster pirate and roustabout. Tales of incredible debauches; tales of opium and hashish, and I know not what other strange ingredients; tales of whisky bouts lasting for weeks! I remember a picture of two sailor boys at sea in a small boat, unable to escape from each other, conceiving a furious hatred of each other, and when they got ashore, retiring behind the sand-dunes to fight. They fought until they

could hardly walk—and then they repaired to town to heal their bruises with alcohol.

The next time we met was six or eight years later; and this time the controversy was more serious. For now Jack had read "Love's Pilgrimage," and was exasperated by what seemed to him a still less excusable form of asceticism, that of sex. Here was a so-called hero, a prig of a poet, driving a young wife to unhappiness by notions born in the dark corners of Christian monkeries. I am not sure just how I defended poor Thyrsis; I am not sure how clearly I myself saw at that time the peculiar working of sex-idealism which had manifested itself in that novel; the impulse a man has to be ashamed of advantages given to him by nature and society, and so to put himself chivalrously under the feet of a woman—raising her, an image of perfection, upon a pedestal of his own self-reproach. Sometimes she refuses to stay upon this pedestal; and so results a comical plight for a too-imaginative ascetic!

The argument between Jack and myself was handicapped on that occasion by the fact that his voice was almost entirely gone because of a sore throat. He was trying the alcohol treatment; my last picture of him in the flesh was very much of the flesh, alas!—with a flask of gin before him, and the stumps of many cigarettes in his dinner-plate, and his eyes red and unwholesome-looking. He has told the story of his travels in the Kingdom of Alcoholia himself, told it bravely and completely, so I am not obliged to use any reserve in speaking of this aspect of his life. I went away, more than ever confirmed as a mollycoddle!

But Jack London was a man with a magnificent mind, and a giant's will. He fought tremendous battles in his own soul—battles in despite of his own false philosophy, battles which he was fighting even while he was quarreling at other men's self-restraint. He went on a trip around the Horn, which lasted several months, and drank nothing all that time; also, he wrote that shining book, "John Barleycorn," one of the most useful and most entertaining ever penned by a man.

It was our habit to send each other our new books, and to exchange comments on them. When I read "John Barleycorn" I wrote that the book had made me realize a

new aspect of the drink problem, a wrong it did to men who never touched it—in depriving them of companionship, making them exiles among their fellows. So much of men's intercourse depends upon and is colored by drinking! I, for example, had always felt that my friendship with Jack London had been limited by that disharmony.

He wrote in reply that I was mistaken; it was especially with my attitude towards sex that he disagreed. We exchanged some letters about the matter, and mentally prepared ourselves for that duel which will never be fought. In concluding the subject of alcohol, let me point out that Jack himself settled the controversy by voting for "California Dry" at the election held a few days before his death. His explanation was that while he enjoyed drinking, he was willing to forego that enjoyment for the sake of the younger generation; and it would indeed be a graceless ascetic who asked more than that!

So far as concerns the matter of sex, the test of a man's philosophy is that at the age of forty he has kept his belief in womankind, in the joy and satisfaction that true love may give. Where the philosophy of "self-expression" had led Jack London was known to many who heard him tell of a book he planned to write, giving the whole story of his experiences with women. He meant to write it with the same ruthless honesty he had used in "John Barleycorn"; revealing his tragic disillusionment, and his contempt for woman as a parasite, a creature of vanity and self-indulgence

Jack's conquests among the sex had been many, and too easy, it would seem; like most fighters, he despised an unworthy antagonist. The women who threw themselves at his head came from all classes of society, drawn to him as moths to a flame; but it is evident that his philosophy was to blame for the fact that there were so few among them he could respect. There were surely many able to hold the interest of a great man, who did not share his philosophy, and therefore remained unnoticed by him.

It is not generally the custom to write of these things in plain words; but in the case of Jack London it would be futile to do otherwise, because he spoke of them freely, and would have written of them in the same way. His whole attitude was a challenge to truth-telling, a call for

frankness, even to the point of brutality. The book he planned was to be published under some such name as "Jack Liverpool"—which you must admit would hardly have been a very adequate disguise. I have heard one of his best friends say that he is glad Jack never lived to write it.

For my part, believing as I do that the salvation of the race depends upon unmasking the falsehoods of our class-morality—the institution which I call "marriage plus prostitution"—I cannot but sigh for this lost story. What an awakening it would have brought to the mothers of our so-called "better classes," if Jack London had ever given to the world the true story of his experiences with their daughters! As a school boy in Oakland, for example, with the young girls of the comfortable classes in that city! He and his companions, sons of workingmen and poor people, looking up to the great world above them inquiringly, made the strange discovery that these shining, golden-haired pets of luxury, guarded at home and in their relations with their social equals by the thousand sleepless eyes of scandal, found it safe and pleasant to repair to secret rendezvous among the willow thickets of Lake Merritt, and there play the nymph to handsome and sturdy fauns of a class below the level ever reached by the thousand sleepless eyes!

When you listened to a narrative such as that, you realized the grim meaning that Jack London put into his essay, "What Life Means to Me," telling of the embitterment that came to him when he, the oyster pirate and roustabout, broke into the "parlor floor of society":

> Where they were not alive with rottenness, quick with unclean life, they were merely the unburied dead. . . . The women were gowned beautifully, I admit; but to my naive surprise I discovered that they were of the same clay as all the rest of the women I had known down below in the cellar. . . . It is true these beautifully gowned, beautiful women prattled sweet little ideals and dear little moralities; but, in spite of their prattle, the dominant key of the life they lived was materialistic. And they were so sentimentally selfish! They assisted in all kinds of sweet little charities and informed one of the fact, while all the time the food they ate and the beautiful clothes they wore were bought out of dividends stained with the blood of child labor, and sweated labor, and prostitution itself.

Jack London had a dream of another kind of love; the dream of a strong, free, proud woman, the mate for a

strong, free, proud man. This dream came into his writings at the start; into "A Daughter of the Snows," his third novel—the very name of it, you perceive. This story, published in the second year of the present century, was crude and boyish, but it had the promise of his dawning greatness, and was the occasion of my first letter to him, and the beginning of our friendship. Afterwards he told this same dream of the perfect mating, over and over again; he continued to tell it long after he had ceased to believe in it.

This necessity of writing about sex in a way that was utterly insincere must have been the main cause of that contempt for his own fiction which London was so swift and vehement to proclaim. The expression of this contempt was the most startling thing about him, to any one who admired his work. "I loathe the stuff when I have done it. I do it because I want money and it's an easy way to get it. But if I could have my choice about it I never would put pen to paper—except to write a Socialist essay, to tell the bourgeois world how much I despise it." I remember trying to persuade him that he must have enjoyed writing the best of his stories—"The Sea Wolf" and "The Call of the Wild"; but he would not have it so. He was a man of action; he liked to sail a boat, to run a ranch, to fight for Socialism.

His real attitude towards woman was expressed in "Martin Eden," his most autobiographical novel, whose hero gives his final conclusion about life by dropping himself out of the porthole of an ocean steamer at night. This hero is a working boy, who makes a desperate struggle to rise from poverty; but the girl of the world of culture, whom he idealizes and worships, proves a coward and fails him in his need. That is one wrong an uncomprehending woman can do to a man; and yet another is to comprehend his weaker part too well. I have heard friends of London's boyhood tell how he came back from the Klondike with the flush of his youthful dream upon him—the dream of the primitive female, the "mate" of the strong and proud and free man; and how a shrewd young woman saw her chance and proceeded to play the primitive female in drawing-rooms, leaping over tables and chairs, and otherwise exhibiting abounding energy. But when this game had accomplished its purpose she did

no more leaping, but "settled down," as the phrase is; and so came a divorce.

This "Martin Eden" is assuredly one of Jack London's greatest works; he put his real soul into it, and the fact that it was so little known and read, must have been of evil significance to him. It taught him that if an American writer wants to earn a living with his pen—especially an extravagant living—it is necessary that he should avoid dealing in any true and vital way with the theme of sex. Either he must write over and over again the dream of primitive and perfect mating, a phenomenon unreal and unconvincing to people who are not primitive, but who have intellects as well as bodies to mate; or else, if he deals with modern life, he must give us details of the splendid and devastating passions of the prosperous—the kind of perfumed poison now all the rage. One saw the beginning of that in "The Little Lady of the Big House," and I count this book the most sinister sign in the life of Jack London. A man can hardly have a thirty-six thousand dollar a year contract with the Hearst magazines and still keep his soul alive!

I would say to myself, mournfully, that America had "got" Jack London, just as it "got" Mark Twain! But then something would happen to show me that I had given up hope too soon. Jack had a mind which worked unceasingly, and impelled him irresistibly; he had a love of truth that was a passion, a hatred of injustice that burned volcanic fires. He was a deeply sad man, a bitterly, cruelly suffering man, and no one could tell what new vision he would forge in the heat of his genius. If I write of him here severely it is because I believe in the rigid truth, which he himself preached; but I would not leave anyone with the idea that I do not appreciate his greatness, both as a writer and a man.

There were many among his friends and mine who gave him up. He went to Hawaii, and the "smart set" there made a lion of him, and he condescended to refer appreciatively to their "sweet little charities" on behalf of the races they were exploiting. He went to Mexico, and fell under the spell of the efficiency of oil engineers, and wrote for "Collier's Weekly" a series of articles which caused radicals to break out in rage. Jack was a boy to the end, and must make new discoveries and have new

enthusiasms. If a naval officer took him over a battleship, he would perceive that it was a marvelous and thrilling machine; but then in the quiet hours of the night he would see the pitiful white faces of the stokers, to whom as a guest of an officer he had not been introduced!

Yes, for he had been in the place of these stokers, and their feelings had been stamped upon his soul. He might set up to be a country gentleman, and fall into a fury with his "hands" for their stupidity and incompetence; but if you said to him, "How about the class war?" instantly he would be there with his mind. "Yes, of course, I know how they feel; if I were in their place I would never do a stroke of work I did not have to." It is a stressful thing to have an imagination, and to see many sides of life at once!

Jack had a divine pity, he had wept over the East End of London as Jesus wept over Jerusalem. For years afterwards the memories of this stunted and debased population haunted him beyond all peace; the pictures he wrote of them in "The People of the Abyss" will be read by posterity with horror and incredulity, and recognized as among the most powerful products of his pen. Those, with his vivid and intensely felt Socialist essays, constitute him one of the great revolutionary figures of our history. I know that he kept a spark of that sacred fire burning to the very end, for a little over a year before his death I tried him with the bulky manuscript of "The Cry for Justice." The preface he wrote for it is one of the finest things he ever did, and some of it will be carved upon his monument:

> It is so simple a remedy, merely service. Not one ignoble thought or act is demanded of any one of all men and women in the world to make fair the world. The call is for nobility of thinking, nobility of doing. The call is for service, and such is the wholesomeness of it, he who serves all best serves himself.

That is what life had taught him at the end. But it was not easy for him to learn such a lesson, for he had an imperious nature, fierce in its demands, and never entirely to be tamed. The struggle between individualism and Socialism was going on in his whole being all the time. In the copy of "Martin Eden" which he sent me he wrote: "One of my motifs in this book was an attack on individualism (in the person of the hero). I must have

bungled for so far not a single reviewer has discovered it." After reading the book I replied that it was easy to understand the befuddlement of the critics; for he had shown such sympathy with his hard-driving individualist hero that it would hardly occur to anyone to take the character as a warning and a reproach.

You feel that same thing in all his books—in "The Sea Wolf," and especially in "The Mutiny of the Elsinore"; the Nietzschean world-conqueror has conquered London's imagination, in spite of his reason and his conscience. If I have written here with cruel frankness about the personal tragedies of his life, it is because I would not have posterity continue in the misunderstanding of which he complained in the case of "Martin Eden." No, do not make that mistake about his life and its meaning; most certainly it is not a glorification of the red-blooded superman, trampling all things under his feet, gratifying his imperious desires. Rather is it a demonstration of the fact that the world-conquering superman, trampling all things under his feet and gratifying all his desires, commits suicide by swallowing laudanum at the age of forty, because pleasure and wealth and fame have turned to ashes on his lips. Jack's friends say that the cause was a desire for two women at the same time; but I don't believe that a mature, intellectual man will kill himself for such a reason, unless his moral forces have been sapped by years of self-indulgence.

It was the "Martin Eden" ending, which had haunted Jack London all his life, and which in the end he made a reality. What a shame, and what a tragedy to our literature, that capitalist America, the philosophy of individualist greed and selfishness, should have stolen away the soul of this man, with all his supreme and priceless gifts! He had seen so clearly our vision of fellowship and social justice—how clearly, let him tell you in his own words, the last words he wrote upon ethical matters:

> He, who by understanding becomes converted to the gospel of service, will serve truth to confute liars and make them truth-tellers; will serve kindness so that brutality will perish; will serve beauty to the erasement of all that is not beautiful. And he who is strong will serve the weak that they may become strong. He will devote his strength not to the debasement and defilement of his weaker fellows, but to the making of opportunity for them to make themselves into men rather than into slaves and beasts.

These words are from "The Cry for Justice," "this humanist Holy Book," as London called it. Such words, and actions based upon them, make precious his memory, and will preserve it as long as anything in American literature is preserved. Perhaps the best thing I can add to this chapter is a statement of what I personally owed to him—the utmost one writer can owe to another. When he was at the height of his fame, and I was unknown, I sent him proofs of "The Jungle," explaining that I had been unable to find a publisher, and wished to raise money to publish the book myself. There are many jealousies in the literary world; some who win its laurels by bitter struggle are not eager to raise up rivals. But Jack was not one of these; he wrote a letter about the book, hailing it as "The 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' of Wage Slavery," and rallying the Socialist movement as by a bugle-call to its support. If that book went all over the world, it was Jack London's push that started it; and I am only one of a score of authors who might tell the same story of generous and eager support.

## CHAPTER CIX

### THE STEALTHY NEMESIS

While I am writing this book death swings his scythe, and two more artists enter the ghostly marathon of Fame.

The first of them is Joseph Conrad. Away back in my early days someone sent me from England a copy of his first novel, "Almayer's Folly," and after that I kept watch, and managed somehow to get hold of "Heart of Darkness" and "Lord Jim" and "Youth." I used to rave about these books to everyone I knew; but when at last Conrad became famous I had a secret resentment—he had been mine for so long that I did not like to give him up to those who did not understand him! In his later writings he deteriorated, as many old men do, and I saw the critics giving to these inferior books the praise which belonged to the earlier ones.

Conrad's death has been the occasion for much discussion of the "romanticism" of his novels. The fact is that he was as realistic as he knew how to be. The reason he seems "romantic" is because the scenes and char-

acters of his stories are remote and strange to us. But they were not at all strange to Conrad; he had sailed these Eastern seas and met these people, and their tragic fates were as commonplace to him as street-car traffic to us.

One other thing the obituary reviews agree upon—that he was the perfect type of the "pure" artist, who gave us immortal fiction without trace of purpose. And that I call a joke for the ages: Joseph Conrad being as grim and determined a propagandist as ever used fiction for a medium. Most of the time he carries on this propaganda with the Olympian calm of one who is sure of his thesis and fears no dispute. But now and then he stumbles upon some personality or point of view which seems to threaten his doctrine; and then suddenly the front of Jove becomes wrinkled, and the eyes of Jove shoot flames, and we discover the great Olympian in a venomous fury.

The strangest fact about this master of English prose is that he was born in Poland, and began life as a sailor, shipping on French craft in the Mediterranean. He was born in 1857 and came to England at the age of twenty-one; he rose in the British merchant service to become a captain, and was nearly forty before his first novel was published.

This man paces the quarter-deck through the long night watches in lonely silent seas. He reflects upon life, and comes to a conclusion about it. But it is not the conclusion officially recommended by his native countrymen; this merchant captain does not pray to the Virgin Mary for the safety of his ship and the souls of those on board; neither does he accept the official formula of his adopted country, in whose churches the congregations implore:

> Eternal Father, strong to save,
> Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
> Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
> Its own appointed limits keep:
> O hear us when we cry to Thee
> For those in peril on the sea.

No, in the fiction of Joseph Conrad the gods, both male and female, have shriveled up and crumbled and blown away as dust, and over the universe there broods a dark inscrutable fate. Conrad himself puts it into words: "a stealthy Nemesis lies in wait." You see, he uses the classic symbol, and unites in one blending the terror of four

different races—Greek, Polish, English and Malay. This "stealthy Nemesis" is the enemy of men, and they fight against it, and almost invariably it overcomes them and destroys them, the good and generous and capable as well as the cowardly and weak.

Such is the fact of man's life; and the question then becomes: what shall man do? The first thing, obviously, is for him to understand; and so the great master toils incessantly and with religious ardor to embody his philosophic theory in human types and experiences. Do not let anyone lead you astray on this point: these dignified and noble art-works are "thesis novels," composed for a didactic purpose, in exactly the same way as the Sunday school tales about little Bobbie who fell into the creek because he disobeyed his mother and went fishing on the Lord's day. Great moral lessons do not get embodied in art-works by accident, any more than the wheels of a watch get put together by accident; so, while you absorb the elaborately contrived pessimism of Joseph Conrad, you must know that you are attending an Agnostic Sunday school.

Men have not merely to understand, but to act; therefore the pupils of this school are taught a moral code. They must stand together against the stealthy Nemesis which seeks to destroy them; and their rules of behavior must be so deeply graven in their souls that the reaction will be instinctive—for you never know at what moment the stealthy Nemesis will strike at you, in the form of fire at sea, or storm, or collision, or submerged reefs, or savages, or the slow, insidious action of physical or moral disease.

What is this code? The answer is, the code of the British merchant service. Its primary purpose is the protection of the ship, a valuable piece of property. So, in place of an imaginary God in a speculative heaven, we have a vaguely suggested Owner on the shore. This Owner is the force which creates the shipping industry and keeps it going; He is the goal of loyalty for officers and crew. Agnosticism upon closer study turns out to be Capitalism.

The ship has for ages been the source of a natural and spontaneous autocracy, begotten of the constant threat of danger; hence it comes that the naval officer is the most

complete and instinctive snob in the world, and the merchant officer the perfect task-master. And when the self-made, risen-from-the-ranks merchant officer comes on shore, and has to deal with shore questions, we are not surprised to find him a hearty and boisterous Tory. In "Chance" we meet—but assuredly not by chance!—a feminist woman, and learn what Conrad thinks of this species; he impresses us as a fuming old British clubman, who would like to get the heads of all thinking women upon one neck—and then wring the neck!

In the same way, in "Under Western Eyes" we get Conrad's view of politics; in a book written in the days of the Tsardom, we learn that a Siberian refugee who devotes his life to the overthrow of this hideous tyranny is an odious and unspeakable creature, and that a woman of means who helps him is a gawk and a bundle of scandals. It is a picture of social revolutionists of a sort you may pick up at any tea-table where the wives of legation attachés shrug their delicate white shoulders and prattle snobbish wit. Published in 1911, this book is a prophecy of the White Terror, that combination of holy knavery and romantic reaction which has made Poland the curse of Europe.

But the proper place to study Conrad is at sea. And we find that, just as Meredith takes the British caste system to be God, just as O. Henry takes the Standard Oil Company to be God, so Conrad takes the capitalist ownership and control of marine transportation. Analyzing the stories in the light of economic science, we find the stealthy Nemesis revealed as organized greed exploiting unorganized ignorance.

Take that most fascinating of sea tales, one of the great imaginative feats of literature: take "Youth." A young man puts out to sea in an old tub of a vessel, and the old tub goes to pieces beneath his feet. One after another comes a procession of calamities; but he is young, and what does he care for troubles and dangers? The ship goes down in the end, but it is all a glory and a thrill to Youth, which laughs at the stealthy Nemesis and lives to tackle it again.

When we are young we read this, and our hearts are lifted up, and we know ourselves to be gods. But with maturing years and understanding, we come back to it,

and what do we find? The cruel power which we took to be Nature, the perils of the deep, turns out to be nothing more romantic than the practice of marine insurance! If you own a ship and it becomes old and unseaworthy, you would in the ordinary course of events not trust a valuable cargo and a score of human lives to that ship. But finding that you can insure both ship and cargo, and get more money by sinking her than by selling her for junk, you continue to send her out until she falls to pieces; and Youth, deliberately kept in ignorance by capitalist control of schools and colleges, thinks it glory and wonder to sail out and fight a losing battle with "Nature."

There is a story concerning Joseph Conrad, that when he became master of a ship, he conceived a desire to bring her home through the Torres Straits, which are especially dangerous waters. He had the fantastic idea that he wanted to sail in them, because he had read stories about them. The owners permitted him to have his way, and the critics and reviewers are thrilled by this sign of "romance" in ship owners. Critics and reviewers, you see, are sweet and innocent souls; only an evil-minded "muckrake man" would make inquiries as to the age of that ship and the amount of insurance she carried through the Torres Straits!

The capitalist shipping industry is full of facts of this sort. Take, for example, the "Plimsoll line." There was an English workingman who became a rich manufacturer, and did not forget his class, but devoted his life to trying to save the seamen and officers who were sent out in these "coffin ships." He was elected to Parliament, and brought in a bill providing that ships should not be loaded beyond a certain line—the "Plimsoll line," it was called. When his fellow-members voted it down, he shook his fist at them and called them "villains." Of course they were shocked, and wanted to expel him, but they didn't quite dare; they gave him ten days to think it over, and then he apologized, and they passed his bill—a most admirable form of compromise for a reformer!

For a generation after this, as cold statistics showed, some thousands of British seamen and officers escaped all the cruelties of Nature, the stealthy Nemesis of Joseph Conrad. For years this "Plimsoll line" served these thousands of seamen and officers in place of the Holy Trinity,

the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the Gentle Jesus meek and mild, the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and likewise all the Saints in the calendar, the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble Army of Martyrs, the heavenly choir of Angels and Archangels, the Cherubim and Seraphim, and the Holy Church throughout all the world. But this divine supervision cost British shipping owners a certain number of millions of pounds of profit every year, and so they paid the campaign funds of their Tory and Liberal parties and got their henchman, David Lloyd-George, in authority and repealed that law; so now those thousands of seamen and officers are once more falling victims to the stealthy Nemesis!

And Joseph Conrad—what has he to say about this? As a man of the sea, he knows the facts; and in "The Nigger of the Narcissus," that most cruel-souled book, he takes occasion to pour his jeering scorn upon those who try to save the lives of seamen. You have to read the actual text to get the full effect of his venom. A seaman is talking:

"I mind I once seed in Cardiff the crew of an overloaded ship—leastways she weren't overloaded, only a fatherly old gentleman with a white beard and an umbreller came along the quay and talked to the hands. Said as how it was crool hard to be drownded in winter just for the sake of a few pounds more for the owner—he said. Nearly cried over them—he did; and he had a square mainsail coat, and a gaff-topsail hat too—all proper. So they chaps, they said they wouldn't go to be drownded in winter—depending upon that 'ere Plimsoll man to see 'em through the court. They thought to have a bloomin' lark and two or three days' spree. And the beak giv' 'em six weeks—coss the ship warn't overloaded. Anyways they made it out in court that she wasn't. There wasn't one overloaded ship in Penarth Dock at all. 'Pears that old coon he was only on pay and allowance for some kind people, under orders to look for overloaded ships, and he couldn't see no further than the length of his umbreller. Some of us in the boarding-house, where I live when I'm looking for a ship in Cardiff, stood by to duck that old weeping spunger in the dock. We kept a good look out, too—but he topped his boom directly he was outside the court. . . . Yes. They got six weeks' hard. . . ."

The coast of California, near which I live, is a favored lurking place of the stealthy Nemesis. The entire coast is a line of jagged rocks, with very few harbors, and vessels continually strike upon the rocks and are pounded to pieces. Sometimes they are great passenger steamers, and

hundreds of people are in danger and have to be taken off on tugs; the newspapers give us hourly bulletins of what is happening, and their correspondents perform prodigies of daring and speed to get us photographs of the disaster in the first editions. The public reads of these tragedies, and is awed by the spectacle of man struggling in vain against the stealthy Nemesis.

What is the fact about this matter? It is very simple: the Nemesis here consists of the fact that the Pacific Coast from Seattle to San Diego makes a convex curve; so ships of all sorts, the great lumber schooners, the little salmon steamers, the great passenger liners, have to go a few miles farther out to sea in order to be safe. But that additional distance at sea means so many million dollars a year out of the pockets of the owners. It means not merely that more fuel has to be burned, it means that more of the ship's time has to be taken, and more wages paid to officers and crew; in the case of the great liners it means that several hundred passengers have to be fed an additional meal!

So naturally the owners, being fully covered by insurance, are clamorous in their demands, and the ship's officers are bending all their energies to save every yard of distance and every second of time. Always and everywhere up and down the coast they are gliding past the rocky points, and in the darkness and fogs and storms they risk an inch too much. To me this seems an eminently "romantic" situation; I can imagine a great imaginative artist rearing it into a tremendous symbol of human guilt. But this artist would make the discovery that the principal magazines on the Pacific Coast are published by the railroad companies which own and operate the steamship lines!

Every hour the progress of science increases man's control over nature, and therefore the safety of travel at sea. If it were not for private ownership and the blind race for profits, these dangers would be largely a memory, and the stealthy Nemesis of Conrad, like the gods of the Polish Catholic and the Anglican Protestant churches, would shrivel up and crumble and blow away as dust. Would Conrad like that? Or would he feel the irritation of an old man who has staked his reputation upon a bad guess? He gives you the answer in "The Nigger of the

Narcissus," a whole novel written to satirize the altruistic impulse, and expose it as a destroyer of discipline and character. He assigns the role of "agitator" at sea to an odious little Cockney rat; and when this creature has got the poor crew stirred up to mutiny, what sport Conrad has with them! Such lofty sarcasm:

> Our little world went on its curved and unswerving path carrying a discontented and aspiring population. They found comfort of a gloomy kind in an interminable and conscientious analysis of their unappreciated worth; and inspired by Donkin's hopeful doctrines they dreamed enthusiastically of the time when every lonely ship would travel over a serene sea, manned by a wealthy and well-fed crew of satisfied skippers.

In the chapter on Matthew Arnold I mentioned Paul Elmer More as a critic who has based his reputation upon the thesis of man's helplessness in the presence of the universe; I explained Matthew Arnold as a poet who finds his ideal both moral and poetical in a dignified and mournful resignation to the evils of life. And here is another of these Great Mourners, a zealot of Pessimism. Woe to you, if in his Agnostic Sunday school you venture to breathe a hope for mankind! Woe to you if you commit the supreme offense of art, the suggesting of a happy ending for a novel! Woe to you, beyond all land-woes; for now you are in Neptune's empire, and there is no Bill of Rights, no freedom of speech, press or assemblage; he who murmurs an optimistic thought hears the dread word Mutiny—and the "beak" gives him "six months hard!"

## CHAPTER CX

### THE REBEL IMMORTAL

Henry James remarks somewhere that an American has to study for fifty years of his life in order to attain, culturally speaking, the point from which a European starts at birth. Just what does he mean by this unpatriotic utterance? I am reminded of it when I think of Anatole France, and recall his characteristic sayings. Consider the following:

> 'Tis a great infirmity to think. God preserve you from it, my son, as He has preserved His greatest saints, and the souls whom He loves with especial tenderness and destines to eternal felicity.

Now it is possible to conceive of a Catholic bishop or a Methodist missionary or a Kleagle of the Ku Klux Klan who might be too stupid to understand that remark; but it is difficult to conceive how, understanding it, he could withhold the tribute of a smile. Into this remark a great master of words has distilled the essence of a civilization, the precious flavor of centuries of culture. There are only thirty-four words in it, and yet you can afford to meditate upon it for a long time. The writer of such a paragraph possesses a mind emancipated from the shams and delusions of the ages; he is skeptical, realistic, and as witty as it is possible for a man to be; yet also he is urbane—he does not seize you by the shoulders and shake you, for he has learned that there are all kinds of strange people in the world, and he asks merely that you consent to smile with him.

How is such a man brought into existence? His father was a book-seller, and so he breathed culture in his childhood; he read everything from every part of the world, especially things written by men long since dead; things full of that beauty mingled with sadness which is one of the gifts of time. Anatole France learned to be at home in strange cultures, and at the same time he studied the masters of his own country, whose specialties are precision and lucidity and charm of phrase. At the age of twenty-seven he published a story, "The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard," a sentimental pretty tale about an elderly, kind-hearted French antiquarian, who rescues a little girl from cruel mistreatment, and then discovers that under the French law he is guilty of abduction. It might have been written by any of our magazine writers of the cheer-up, God's-in-His-Heaven school—provided only that these writers had possessed a thousand years of culture.

It was just what the Academy of Richelieu loved, and they crowned it. The young writer was taken up by an exquisite French lady, who became his mistress, and set up a salon for him, and helped him to meet all the editors and critics—which is how you make fame and fortune in Paris, and sometimes in America, I am told. This Frenchman was clever and witty, sensual, cynical, but not too much so for his elegant free-thinking tradition. He wrote other novels and a great quantity of miscellaneous

writings, and in 1896, at the age of fifty-two, his labors were rewarded by the great French honor, he became one of Richelieu's forty Immortals. In the ordinary course of events there was nothing more for him to do, save to sink back in his comfortable arm-chair and listen to the plaudits of Paris.

But a strange and alarming thing happened. The struggle over the Dreyfus case arose, and Anatole France leaped into the arena, joining Zola, whom he had previously denounced as a beastly writer. Here was something absolutely without precedent—that an Academician should turn into a Socialist, and take to attending meetings of workingmen, and addressing to them remarks unfit to be quoted in respectable newspapers. Worse even yet, he, the pride and glory of art-for-art's-sake culture, took to putting radical propaganda into novels! They had let him in among the Immortals, and there was no way to get him out; so here was one of the pillars of literary authority, portraying his country as an island of penguins, and the pillars of his church and state as grotesque, wingless birds, dressing themselves in frock-coats and silk hats and hopping about upon obscene errands. Have a glimpse of them:

"Do you see, my son," he exclaimed, "that madman who with his teeth is biting the nose of the adversary he has overthrown, and that other one who is pounding a woman's head with a huge stone?"

"I see them," said Bulloch. "They are creating law; they are founding property; they are establishing the principles of civilization, the basis of society, the foundations of the State."

"How is that?" asked old Maël.

"By setting bounds to their fields. That is the origin of all government. Your penguins, O Master, are performing the most august of functions. Throughout the ages their work will be consecrated by lawyers, and magistrates will confirm it."

"Penguin Island" was published in 1908; and then came the war, and this elderly antiquarian—he was seventy then—came forward and enlisted to fight for his country. But that did not mean, as with many others of lesser judgment, that he gave up his hopes for the working class, and surrendered to the propaganda of capitalist nationalism. We find him at the age of seventy-five, carrying a red flag in a procession of French radicals, protesting against the acquittal of the assassin of Jaurès. We

find him ready to break an engagement to a literary banquet in order to address a working-class meeting in protest against capitalist church and state. He, the greatest of all the Immortals, sets himself against the other thirty-nine; he, the old man, sets himself against the cultured youth of his country, who have abandoned themselves to a mixture of Catholic mysticism with homosexuality, of Dadaist imbecility with athleticism having for its goal the turning of machine-guns upon the workers.

The books of Anatole France afford a curious study of struggle between the old pessimistic, cynical culture of capitalism and the new creative culture of the awakening proletariat. These cultures are absolutely irreconcilable, but Anatole France believed in both. He was a social revolutionist with his conscious mind and judgment, while he remained a fatalist and a scoffer with his hereditary culture, that ancient accumulation of despair and terror which he had breathed in with the dust in his father's old book-shop.

So he writes "The Gods Are Athirst," in which he portrays mankind as given up to endless misery and destruction; or "The Revolt of the Angels," in which again the heavens are drowned in blood and there is no hope. After which he issues a manifesto upholding Russia, or calling upon the workers to rally to the Third International. He goes before a convention of the organized teachers of France, and delivers to them an address of such magnificent eloquence as to move the assemblage to tears. I have quoted from this address in "The Goslings"; I repeat one paragraph—because it is the duty of a writer to spread these words on every possible occasion, to bring to the great master the help upon which he relies:

> Reason, wisdom, intelligence, forces of the mind and heart, whom I have always devoutly invoked, come to me, aid me, sustain my feeble voice; carry it, if that may be, to all the peoples of the world, and diffuse it everywhere where there are men of good will to hear the beneficent truth! A new order of things is born. The powers of evil die, poisoned by their crime. The greedy and the cruel, the devourers of peoples, are bursting with an indigestion of blood. However sorely stricken by the sins of their blind or corrupt masters, mutilated, decimated, the proletarians remain erect; they will unite to form one universal proletariat, and we shall see fulfilled the great Socialist prophecy: "The union of the workers will be the peace of the world."

It was interesting to note, in the obituaries which the death of Anatole France brought forth, how almost universally this aspect of his life was glossed over. Our literary reviews told all about him as a master of French prose, a supreme ironist in the tradition of Rabelais, Voltaire, and Renan. But they left it for the radical papers to celebrate Anatole France, the crusader, the carrier of the red flag. I am urged to believe that our literary Tories are honest, but all this moves me to wonder.

I ask them, once for all, what is it they want? What proof will content our cultural stand-patters? Here is their crowned favorite, their revered master, the man who was as witty as it is possible for a human being to be; and he sets out to prove to them that it is just as easy to be witty in the service of Justice as in the service of Mammon. I ask you, gentlemen of letters, do you know how a sentence can be wittier than this: "The law in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread."

## CHAPTER CXI

### A TEXT-BOOK FOR RUSSIA

Mrs. Ogi has been silent for some time; saving her energies in anticipation of that greatest satisfaction known to wives. Now she takes it. "I told you so!"

"What did you tell me?" asks Ogi, uneasily.

"You have filled up a book, and haven't got in a word about Gloria Swanson's salary, nor what Rupert Hughes really got for 'The Sins of Hollywood'!"

"It's this way," says her husband. "I found I had so much material that I'd have to make two volumes, one dealing with the artists of the past, and the other with living artists."

"I remember, eight years ago," says Mrs. Ogi, "you started out to write a criticism of the world's culture in one volume; and presently you came to me looking worried, and said you had so much about Religion it would need a volume to itself. So you took a hundred thousand words for Religion. And when you started after Journalism, and took a hundred thousand words to tell the

story of your own life, and another hundred thousand to tell about the newspapers. And then Education; you came again and said you had so much about the colleges, you'd have to give a whole volume to them. You took two hundred and five thousand words for the colleges, and then a hundred and ninety-five thousand for the schools!"

As Ogi has no answer to this indictment, she continues: "Just what do you think you've written now?"

"I've written a text-book of culture."

"For the schools?"—very sarcastically.

"It will be serving as a text-book in the high schools of Russia within six months."

"In Russia, yes—"

"In every country in Europe, as soon as the social revolution comes. The workers, taking power, bring a new psychology and a new ethics; naturally they have to have a new art, and new art standards."

"They may want to write their own text-books," suggests Mrs. Ogi.

"No doubt they will—and better than mine. But so far no one has done it—and they will have to use such weapons as they find ready."

Mrs. Ogi is one of those who observe the phenomena of religion with a mingling of fear and longing. It would be wonderful to believe like that! "Of course," she says, "if your side has its way—"

"That is how history is made," says Ogi. "Once upon a time a wealthy Virginia planter, with other wealthy gentlemen from Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, rose up and declared rebellion against his king. A war was fought, and the rebel planter won; therefore he is known as the Father of His Country, and all little boys in school learn how he could not tell a lie. If he had lost his war against his king, he would have been a vile and traitorous varlet, and every little boy in school would have learned by heart a long list of the lies he had told. And just so it is with writers who take up the cause of the dispossessed and disinherited. If the proletariat wins in its war against capitalism, these outcast writers will become leading men of letters. On the other hand, if the proletariat loses, they will remain 'propagandists,' and 'tub-thumpers,' and 'buzzards,' and 'muckrakers'—you recognize those terms."

Yes, Mrs. Ogi admits that she recognizes them; and he continues:

"I have given the workers an honest book, a sound book, from the point of view of their hopes and needs. I say to them: Why should you read the books of your enemies, those who make their glory and their greatness out of your misery and humiliation? Why should you walk into the traps that are set for you? Life is very cruel, but assuredly this is the most cruel thing in your fate—that you should admire those actions which crush you, those tastes which spurn you, those standards which have as their beginning and end your enslavement and degradation."

"None but workers are to see this book?" asks Mrs. Ogi.

"I use the word in its revolutionary sense, the strict scientific sense of those who do the useful and necessary labor, whether of hand or brain. I am pleading especially with the young brain-workers, the intellectuals. For the hand-worker is a slave by compulsion, but the young thinker, the student, has the ancient choice of Hercules, between virtue and vice. He may sell himself to the exploiters, he may take the dress-suit bribe, the motor-cars and the 'hooch' parties, and the beautiful, soft-skinned, hard-souled women; or he may heed my plea, and steel his soul, and go back to the garret which is the cradle of the arts, back to the ancient and honorable occupation of cultivating literature upon a little oatmeal.

"To this young intellectual, hesitating at the parting of ways, I say: Comrade, this world of organized gambling and predation in which we live seems powerful and permanent, but it is an evil dream of but a few more years; the seeds of its own destruction are sprouting in its heart. I am not referring to its moral failure, the fact that it thwarts the most fundamental of human cravings, for justice and for freedom; I mean in the bare material sense—it fails to employ its own workers, it makes misery out of its own plenty, and war and destruction of its abounding prosperity. It is as certain to fall as a pyramid standing on its tip; and when it falls, what is left but the workers? What other force is there, having solidarity, the sense of brotherhood, the ideal of service, of useful

labor, as against the buying and selling and exploiting, the robbing, killing and enslaving which is capitalism?

"This great new force is shaping itself in our world, preparing for the making of the future. And shall this new life not have an art? Shall men not thrill to this vision, and rouse others to make it real? Here lies your task, young comrade; here is your future—and not the timid service of convention, the million-times-over repetition of ancient lies, the endless copying of copies of folly and cruelty and greed. The artists of our time are like men hypnotized, repeating over and over a dreary formula of futility. And I say: Break this evil spell, young comrade; go out and meet the new dawning life, take your part in the battle, and put it into new art; do this service for a new public, which you yourselves will make. That is the message of this book, the last word I have to say: that your creative gift shall not be content to make art works, but shall at the same time make a world; shall make new souls, moved by a new ideal of fellowship, a new impulse of love, and faith—and not merely hope, but determination.

"That is what this book is about," says Ogi; "and maybe not many will get me, but a few will, and they will be the ones I am after."

Mrs. Ogi comes to him and puts her arms about him, trembling a little. "Yes, of course," she says; "and I'm glad you wrote it, in spite of all my terrors."

"Ah, now!" says Ogi, smiling. "We ought to have a picture of this! A happy ending, in the very best bourgeois style!"

# INDEX

Roman numerals refer to chapters, Arabic numerals to pages


Adams, Francis ..... 352
Adams, F. P. ..... 64
Æschylus .....49, 94, 180
Alcibiades .....XVII
Alexander ..... 41
Amos ..... 31
Anderson .....239, 260, 270
Archimedes ..... 41
Ariosto ..... 89
Aristophanes ..XX, 129, 210
Aristotle ..... 117
Arnold .....
....47, 181, LXXI, 323, 379
Assisi ..... 74
Austen .....LII

Babbitt .....138, XLV
Bacon ..... 95
Bakunin ..... 212
Balzac .....LX
Barrett ..... 225
Baudelaire ..... 302
Beer ..... 348
Beers ..... 186
Beethoven ..... L
Bellamy .....238, 352
Bennett .....189
Bernhardi ..... 293
Bernhardt ..... 123
Besant ..... 352
Bierce .....CII
Blake ..... 202
Boccaccio .....XXVIII
Borgia ..... 80
Brandes ..... 294
Brawne ..... 187
Brooks ..... 327
Brown, Bishop ..... 74
Brown, J. G. ..... 12
Browning .....80, LXX
Buchanan ..... 352
Buddha ..... 39
Bunyan..XXXVIII, 239, 283
Burbank ..... 279
Burns .....XLIX, 244, 339
Byron .....LVII,
181, 203, 228, 241, 251 301
Cade ..... 103
Calas ..... 133
Carlyle .....
...13, 77, LXVIII, 311, 337
Caroline ..... 180
Cartier ..... 95
Cervantes .....XXXII
Chambers .....114, 356
Charles I ..... 106
Charles X ..... 195
Clemens .....
C, 91, 334, 340, 348, 359, 369
Cleon ..... 53
Coleridge .....LIV, 251
Collier ..... 115
Collins ..... 20
Comstock ..... 105
Congreve ..... 114
Conrad .....CIX
Coolidge .....141, 327
Corneille .....XL, 316
Crane .....CIV
Cromwell .....113, 173, 195

Dana .....32, 53
Dante .....XXIX
Davidson ..... 352
Davis .....CIII
Dawes ..... 57
Day ..... 346
Debs ..... 361
de Mille ..... 114
de Young ..... 340
Dickens ....LXXII, 236, 277
Diderot ..... 136
Dobson ..... 64
Doré ..... 12
Dostoievski ....LXXXIV–V
Douglas ..... 305
Dreiser ..... 270
Dreyfus .....282, 381
Dryden .....XXXIX, 143

Eddy ..... 241
Edison ..... 41
Edward ..... 123
Elijah ..... 31

Eliot ..... 235
Emerson .....
..58, 217, 233, LXXV, 253
Euripedes .....51, 52, 54

Fielding .....XLVIII
Flaubert .....LXV, 276
Fox ..... 74
France .....CX
Frederick .....133, 147, 219

Galileo .....106, 117
Gandhi ..... 274
Garrison ..... 245
Gautier ..187, 196, LXII, 208
George IV .....165, 180
Gibbon ..... 171
Gifford ..... 171
Gilder ..... 347
Gladstone .....48, 323
Glyn ..... 114
Goethe .....39, 153, LI, 183
Gogol .....LXXXII, 263
Goncourt .....LXXXVII
Gorki ..259, 273, 328, 335, 339
Gosse .....301, 319
Gracchus ..... 59
Grant ..... 330
Gronlund ..... 339

Haldeman-Julius .....190
Hale ..... 355
Hallam ..... 223
Hamilton ..... 172
Hanska ..... 194
Hardie ..... 173
Harper .....335–6
Harris .....98, 99, XCV
Harvey ..... 331
Hastings ..... 162
Hawthorne ..LXXVIII, 322
Hazlitt ..... 185
Hearn .....187, 336
Heine .....64, LXVI
Henley ..... 14
Henry .....CVII, 349, 375
Herriot ..... 282
Hichens ..... 303
Hippocrates ..... 41
Hohenzollern ..... 219
Homer .....XVIII, 60
Horace .....XXIV
Howells .....CI, 328, 348
Hughes .....28, 383

Hugo .....200,
203, 216, LXI, 280, 296, 298
Hunt .....184, 185, 186

Ibsen .....XC, 339
Ingersoll ..... 331
Irwin ..... 53
Isaiah ..... 30

Jackson ..... 246
James, H.....13, 73,
82, 193, 264, XCVIII, 379
James, W.. ..... 318
Jaurès ..... 381
Jennings .....359–60, 362
Jeremiah ..... 30
Jesus .....38, 39, 257, 293
Joan ..... 102
John ..... 31
Johnson ..... 34
Juvenal .....XXIV

Keats .....LIX, 180, 245
Kingsley ..... 352
Kipling .....14, 129
Kubla Khan ..... 168

Lamb ..... 185
Lanier ..... 254
Lassalle ..... 352
Leacock ..... 53
Lee ..... 232
Lee-Higginson ..... 141
Lenin ..... 36
Lewes .....39, 235
Lewis ..... 206
Lincoln ..... 256
Lloyd-George ..... 377
Lockhart ..... 186
London..CVIII, 338, 349, 351
Longfellow .....LXXVI
Louis XIV .....XLI
Louis XVIII ..... 195
Louis Napoleon .....197, 214
Louis-Philippe ..... 196
l'Ouverture ..... 194
Ludwig .....215, 294
Luther .....74, 83

Mackail ..... 43
Mæcenas ..... 64
Marie Antoinette ....156, 172
Marlowe ..... 96
Martin .....XV

Marx ..... 294
Maupassant .....
....LXXXIX, 286, 340, 361
Medici .....86, 120
Mencken ..... 105
Meredith .....XCVII, 375
Micah ..... 31
Michelangelo ....XXXI, 150
Millet ..... 206
Milton .....14,
XXXVII, 152, 173, 183,
189, 198, 234, 239, 242, 305
Moliere .....XLII, 261
Moore, G. ..... 308
Moore, T. ..... 181
Mordell .....78, 108, 111
More, P. E.....228, 229, 379
More, Sir T. ..... 352
Morgan .....
....140, 141, 270, 293, 350–1
Morrell ..... 351
Morris .....LXXIV
Mozart ..... 151
Murray ..... 57
Musset .....LXIII, 302

Napoleon .....
.....152, 156, 157, 163, 222
Nelson ..... 172
Newton .....131, 173, 254
Nicholas ..... 269
Nietzsche .....13, XCII, 257
Norris .....CV

Palgrave .....109, 190
Palmer .....79, 141, 163
Pasteur ..... 41
Patrick ..... 20
Pericles ..... 41
Phelps .....268, LXXXV
Phillips .....CVI, 349
Pindar ..... 50
Plato .....13, 352
Plimsoll ..... 376
Plutarch ..... 152
Poe .....LXXIX, 302, 253
Pope ..... 131
Porter .....CVII, 349, 375
Pushkin .....260, 261

Queensbury ..... 305

Rabelais ..... 383
Racine .....XLI, 195, 199
Raphael .....XXX, 200
Rasputin .....268, 269
Reade ..... 352
Reed .....37, 38
Renan ..... 383
Richardson .....XLVII, 277
Richelieu ..... 117
Robespierre ..... 141
Rockefeller ..... 109
Roeckel ..... 212
Rogers ..... 331
Roland ..... 88
Roosevelt ..... 354
Rossetti ..... 188
Rousseau .....117, 118,
XLIV, XLV, 155, 271, 291
Ruskin .....
.....173, 236, 238, 309, 352
Russell ..... 362

Saintsbury .....113, 115, 299
Sand .....203, LXIV, 225
Savonarola .....74, 84
Schiller ..... 158
Schopenhauer ..... 216
Scott .....LIII,
171, 181, 186, 188, 247, 249
Shakespeare .....
...39, 48, XXXIII–VI,
129, 131, 151, 183, 195, 241
Shaw .....17, 63,
93, 211, 215, 287, 292, 339
Shelley .....
..176, 177, LVIII, 185, 198
Sherman ..... 228
Sinclair .....107, 328,
335, 345, 347, 353, 363–6, 372
Socrates .....41, 54
Sophocles ..... 51
Southey ...163, 167, LV, 177
Spencer ..... 290
Squires ..... 181
Sterling....93, 94, 338-9, 341
Stowe .....176, 352
Strauss ..... 304
Strindberg ....XCI, 291, 294
Swanson .....28, 383
Swift .....131, XLVI
Swinburne .....168, XCIV
Symonds ..... 297

Taft ..... 269
Tennyson .....LXIX,
109, 188, 217, 279, 301, 346

Thackeray .....LXXIII, 191
Tolstoi .....
....135, 211, LXXXVI,
257, 279, 283, 332, 335, 339
Turgenev ....LXXXIII, 271
Twain .....
91, C, 334, 340, 348, 359, 369

Untermeyer ..... 64

van Eeden ..... 265
Vasari ..... 83
Verestchagin ..... 12
Verhaeren .....XCIII
Verlaine ..... 302
Victoria ....174, 220, 224, 316
Virgil .....XXIII, 79
Voltaire .....XLIII,
195, 209, 240, 282, 383
von Suttner ..... 352

Wagner .....LXVII, 294
Ward .....XCIX
Washington .....41, 384
Watts-Dunton ..... ... 299
Weber ..... 152
Webster ..... 246
Wells ..... 317
Westbrook ..... 182
Whistler ....187, XCVI, 250
Whiteing ..... 352
Whitman .....
.....LXXX, 275, 282, 297
Whittier .....LXXVII, 253
Wilde .....XCV, 346
Witte ..... 331
Wood ..... 110
Wordsworth...LVI, 181, 182
Wycherley ..... 114

Zola .....
..LXXXVIII, 296, 349, 381

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